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IF MEN WERE WISE.



If Men were Wise.

A Novel.

BY

E. L. Shew.

"Happy are they who live in the dream of their own existence, and see all things in the light of their own minds; who walk by faith and hope; to whom the guiding star of their youth still shines from afar and into whom the spirit of the world has not entered! The yoke of life is to them light and supportable. The world has no hold on them. They are in it, not of it; and a dream and a glory is ever around them."—HAZLITT.



In Three Volumes.

Vol. III.

London:

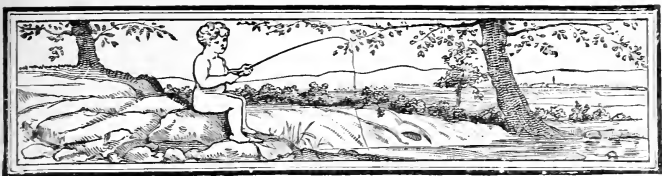
Richard Bentley & Son,

Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen.

1894.

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IF MEN WERE WISE.

CHAPTER I.

ONE lovely afternoon in the preceding May Wrayburn had found himself once more in Swanneck. But he was not alone ; young Jack Lansdell accompanied him.

Jack was at that stage of boy-life when the dry aliment of learning has to be washed down by copious draughts of light, adventurous literature. His mind was saturated with certain words and phrases which, acting upon him like some drug, kept him in a

fantasy, in which the distant and unknown appeared more real than the present and familiar things of everyday life.

When Wrayburn was in London, just after his marriage, he had made a jesting half-promise that whenever he returned to America Jack should go too. And now Master Jack very resolutely kept him to that promise. As soon as he heard Wrayburn was going abroad again, the pleasant country rectory where he was being educated became as insupportable as a cage to him. His mother and Wrayburn were incessantly written to and teased, until at length, against their will and judgment, they were induced to terminate his school-life more abruptly than had ever been intended.

Poor Mrs. Lansdell gave an unwilling consent, though her faith was not strong in the constancy of boys to one idea. "Like enough," she said to Wrayburn, "he'll be wanting something quite different when he

sees what farming is really like. But you keep him to it, sir. Don't let him get wandering about America. Rather than that, send him back to me."

So here was Jack in that wonderland of his powerful imagination—the land of forest and mountain, of hunters and Indians, of the buffalo and tomahawk : words which had set his brain on fire and held him bound in strong delusions.

Wrayburn entered Swanneck by road, instead of by the lake, that the boy might gain the most imposing impression of the place first. They rode over from Quentin, through the mysterious gloom and silence of the dense forest, where blazed trees marked the only paths. Gradually rising by long and steep ascents, they came out into the light of day, with the mountains all around them rising dome above dome, pinnacle above pinnacle. Far as eye could reach swelled these mountain billows, with

wildest woodland surging up between. Here and there the blow as of some Titanic sword had cleft forest and mountain base asunder. In the profound gloom of these impenetrable cañons snow lay, "white as ocean foam in the moon," in ridges where it had been drifted.

Jack drew his breath quickly as they wound their tortuous way along the savage pass. The track was so narrow in places that Wrayburn kept looking round and calling out injunctions to the inexperienced lad, while in single file the horses slowly trod their careful way. The snowy caps on distant peaks gleamed afar through the diaphanous air like the tents of angels. On these glittering mountain tabernacles Jack steadied his gaze until the pass widened out as they descended. Presently Swanneck, half hidden in trees, and its silver lake set in the heart of the blue hills, spread out before them like a poet's unclouded vision

of the scene of his unwritten eclogue. Wrayburn, who was in advance, halted and looked down at his old Arcadia. On one of those green knolls, under the spray-like foliage of the newly budding trees, he could see an idyllic shepherdess seated, with her snowy-fleeced idyllic flock feeding around. Her crook, with its blue ribbon true-lover's-knot, lay beside her, while from a lapful of fresh woodland flowers she wove a dewy garland for her hair. And at her dainty feet, in primrose breeches and lilac-blossom coat, reclined the idyllic shepherd, evoking the same strain over and over again from his innocent oaten reed. Merry, monotonous music! but sportive and youthful like the springtime, with its whispering winds and sparkling showers, its darting birds and flickering butterflies.

"That's Swanneck," Wrayburn called out.

"Swanneck!" Jack exclaimed, a little breathlessly, as he came up. But he saw

not the Watteau scene, and caught no sound of the shepherd's piping echoing through the valley. "How do you get down to it?" he said.

"We just go straight on down, following the trail till we reach the level, then take to the woods again."

But the trail did not go straight down by any means. It rose and sank among the low foot hills, going on and over like a Roman road, now canopied by the over-arching woods, now affording fleeting glimpses of distant Auburn far away in another valley.

"Well, Jack, what do you think of it all?" Wrayburn asked.

"It's perfectly stunning," Jack replied. "But I'd rather ride through these woods than along those precipices. Is there no other road to Quentin?"

"Yes, but it's longer. The other trail goes round by Auburn, and nearly doubles

the distance. There is this to be said for both roads, however, that, summer and winter, day and night, they are free from the bicycle fiend or the concertina fiend; and that's more than can be said for any road in England at present."

They rode on in silence again, their horses crunching through the tangled undergrowth or anon stepping freely over the sheeny moss strewn with millions of pine needles. As they neared the settlement Wrayburn spoke again.

"We're just home now, Jack, and I want you to promise me something. These people here know nothing about my marriage, and I don't want them to know. It doesn't matter a straw what they say of me behind my back, but it's not desirable that a lady's name should be in every bar-loafer's mouth. You understand me?"

"Certainly," Jack answered, a little embarrassed. "My mother told me you were

separated from your wife ; but I asked no questions, and know very little about it."

"It's not likely you would feel much interest in such a subject," said Wrayburn.

"But I may as well tell you I'm not separated from my wife, for I really was never married. Her first husband is still alive. Now, on your honour don't say a word about it here."

Jack promised readily, and, pushing forward, they trotted into the settlement, pulling up at the store with a bit of a flourish. They were not expected, and their sudden appearance created quite a little commotion. They had breakfasted in Quentin, and it was now long past the Swanneck dinner hour ; but, with appetites sharpened by long riding, they were quite ready for such cold victual as Mrs. Bord could hastily spread for them before running down to Wrayburn's house to "fix up" for his coming.

News flies quickly in so small a place.

Soon his old neighbours came dropping in to welcome him home, and to make the new-comer's acquaintance.

"Jinny, what d'ye think? The poor devil's back again," Fanshawe said, putting his head in at his own door and addressing his wife, who was kneading bread.

"Never!" she exclaimed, resting her hands on the edge of the great earthenware pan and staring at him.

"Fact; and a youngster from England along with him. They're all down at the store;" and his head disappeared.

His wife quickly wiped her floury hands and went down to the store to see and hear with the rest of her neighbours. She entered just as Wrayburn was leaving.

"Well, I never!" she cried, in her loud, cheery voice, shaking his hand warmly. "Here you are again, I declare, when we all thought you'd gone for ever and a day, and had given you up."

"That's so," chimed in her husband. "We were agoing to write to Mr. Gordon Bennett to see if he'd fit out a search expedition."

"And all I know is, as far as I'm concerned, right glad I am to see you back. Swanneck don't seem half like Swanneck without the poor devil in his château down there."

"It's very good of you to say so," answered Wrayburn, who was a good deal surprised at his cordial reception, for he had never felt himself to be a favourite in Swanneck.

"And it's a young gentleman you've gone and brought back with you instead of a young lady," Mrs. Fanshawe observed, glancing at the travellers with innocent but strong curiosity.

"Stand up, Jack, and let me introduce you to this lady. Mr. John Lansdell, Mrs. Fanshawe," said Wrayburn.

"Oh, I'm quite willing to make his acquaintance, and a very nice young gentle-

man I'm sure he is," she returned, holding out a plump right hand of fellowship; "but still, it's a young lady we've all been on the look out for—isn't it, Mrs. Penrhyn?"

"She means one particular young lady," said Mrs. Penrhyn, with a wink of immense sagacity, but she was too shy to venture to pierce his reserve.

Mrs. Fanshawe had no such scruples. "We were all sure you'd gone after Miss Mary," she said, smiling.

"What made you think so?" he asked carelessly.

"Well, now, every one here knew you were sweet upon her; and you *did* go after her, and you *did* go to England. Now, didn't you?" persisted Mrs. Fanshawe.

"To be sure I did. But what of that?" Wrayburn said, with nonchalant good-humour.

His questioner regarded him with the oddest mixture of doubt and expectation.

"And you didn't get married to her, after all?" she said.

"I'm very sorry to disappoint you, but I'm not married to any one that I know of," he returned lightly.

"Then she refused you?"

"Oh no, she didn't."

"Then you're engaged to her?"

"No, indeed I'm not."

"Have you quarrelled with her?"

"Not I. We parted on the best of terms. And now, if you've done pumping me, Mrs. Fanshawe, I think I'll go down and see how the old house looks. Come along, Jack."

They went out together, and the baffled gossips looked at one another blankly.

"You'll not get much out of him that he doesn't choose to tell you, Jinny," laughed Fanshawe.

"Come, now," his wife retorted, "you were just as keen to hear any news as I was."

"She was uncommonly near the bull's-eye

that time," Jack ventured to remark as he walked with Wrayburn.

"Yes," said the other, "but I knew they would rake me fore and aft with questions, and didn't expect to be let off so easily. They are always devoured with curiosity. Yet they're good souls too," he added, thinking gratefully of their kindly welcome.

Mrs. Bord was waiting for them at the château. Jack was left to examine the pictures, plants, and stuffed creatures around the room, while the other two discussed the question of accommodation. The house had only two rooms, but the outhouses were tolerably spacious. From one of these Mrs. Bord had cleared all the lumber, and contrived a very tidy bedroom. While commending her ingenuity, Wrayburn was not a little surprised at it, for she was a listless, dawlsh-looking woman, always yawning, who raised most moderate expectations in those requiring her services.

"It's a pity to have a lot of useful things like these going to waste," she observed, in her nasal, drawling tones. "Wonder you didn't have 'em into your own rooms."

"I like plenty of space around me," he replied. "That camp-bed doesn't look quite the thing, does it? I'm afraid he won't like it."

"If he don't he shouldn't have come here," Mrs. Bord said indifferently, with a most prodigious yawn.

When she was gone Wrayburn returned to the other room. For several moments he sat silently looking around at his old belongings, with a slight nodding movement of the head, as of one who said to himself, "Alas! alas!" Rising, with the short, self-scorning laugh of a man who thrusts away the long, dim train of retrospective ghosts creeping upon him, he crossed the room.

"You'll find this a rough billet at first, Jack, but when all the baggage comes over

from Quentin I'll be able to make you tolerably comfortable," he said. "This is your home now, Jack, so try to feel homely, and make the best of it. It's not such a bad little place, after all. I know I've had many a happy day here."

"I think it's a first-rate little place," Jack responded cheerfully. "Why, it's like a museum. I see you're quite a botanist."

"No, no," said Wrayburn, "only what Max Müller calls a 'herbalist'—a gatherer and sorter. I've no really scientific knowledge of plants."

He lit his pipe, and, standing in the sunny doorway, leaning against the jamb, looked out over the lake.

"Will you come for a stroll?" he asked presently, glancing over his shoulder.

"I confess I feel rather too tired," said Jack, "and I can't think what makes me so sleepy."

"The air, I suppose. Pick out the most

comfortable chair and have a nap. I'll be back in an hour or two."

Having placed the kettle on a cool part of the stove, he again surveyed his surroundings.

"I haven't even a dog now; those infernal beggars have killed him at last, it seems."

"Whom do you mean?"

"The coyotes. Poor Zulu! for two whole years he was my only companion. Better for me, perhaps, if I'd been content with him. Well, make yourself comfortable, and rest, if you can."

Very discontented he was, altogether too restless to remain indoors and watch the drowsy boy falling asleep. Out in the open he had a better chance of fighting the evil spirit which bade him "curse God and die." The beloved little château found no favour in his sight, because it imaged forth to him all that was sweetest and bitterest to look back upon; because, also, against his in-

clinations, he was forced to it as to his last retreat.

On the warm hillside he threw himself down at full length, and, leaning on one arm, looked around at well-remembered scenes. The evening sun shot dewy rays through clouds in the western sky. They fell aslant the sober brown hills, edging all their spurs with a line of gold, and throwing long shadows across the deep glades sloping precipitously to the water's brim. At this May season the sterile nakedness of the great red jagged rocks was partially hidden by clinging festoons of trailing greenery, like gentle memories softening a hard, rugged life. Dream-like was the calm, religious beauty of the lake—so darkly clear in the foreground, so silvery in the far distance, where the hoary mountains received it peacefully into the remote seclusion of their wild silence. Those magic islands, "Sestos" and "Calypso," appeared less to rise out of the

lake than to float sumptuously in golden ether above it, casting only their spiritualized reflections upon the glassy surface of the still water. The light wind, coquetting with the rustling, plummy pine-branches, swayed them to and fro with the languid movement of an indolent beauty fanning herself, or the slow beat of a sea-bird's pinion. At each rise and fall, shafts of sunlight, parting the deep umbrage in the woods, tinged the mossy ground with vivid golden hues, overlaid by a flitting tracery of shadow. Nature is jealous of sequestered spots of such wild sylvan beauty, allowing only vague glimpses at scenes which she keeps untrodden, and apart for herself alone. From some unseen distance came the booming sound of water rushing swiftly over a deep uneven bed. It was the swash of the river, pealing out its hollow diapason from between the echoing sides of the rocky channel it had worn away between the hills.

All sights and sounds familiar to Wrayburn were around him, but they seemed to have lost their former power. Some of the old glory had passed away, or how could he gaze with indifference on all that once awoke in him an interest and affection that were daily renewed?

Nothing was missing in which erstwhile he took delight. The want was in his own unfed, unsatisfied mind. Darkness within projected an enormous shadow over the whole visible world. He sighed as his languid eyes rested on scenes which had once, with their myriad suggestions and immemorial types, almost sufficed to fill his heart. Would that the feelings of the old days could return, when, as one of the "brethren of the secret," he had devoutly worshipped in this wide temple!

Below there all looked so peaceful. From where he lay he could see the smoke rising from his own roof, a straight blue column;

and the sight of it filled him with sullen resentment. Would it always be thus? Must all the good of life evaporate in a fruitless animosity, an unrepentant, because restricted, rage of hatred, or a dull cast-iron submission to an unjust fate? His whole soul was filled with sickening restlessness at the sight of that faint smoke rising from the household fire, and silently telling of the rest, security, and peace of home, while she whom he loved was deprived of her coverture and left defenceless in the hands of a monster. Yet it was not altogether for her sake—to coax or bribe the monster into quiescence—that he had gone to Loxdale and given him money. It was rather a violent effort to tear out of himself this passionate enmity which disturbed him to his very centre. All the good of life would cease if he must for ever hate. No man goes willingly into exile, even though he may choose his place of banishment; and here,

in his banishment, all that should have brought a lofty comfort added only to his wretchedness. The place he loved yet wearied him, because it marked his boundaries. There was no peace within answering to the peace that breathed around. He was out of harmony with the cheerful brightness of the spring-tide. The "silent sea of pines" oppressed him by their monotony of gloom. The rushing river, and the winds playing around the mountain battlements, all sang of liberty to the crushed heart of a shackled, impotent man. Cold and heavy was his heart to-night as he turned slowly homeward; and the thought of the boy at home weighed upon him with a sense of boredom and lassitude he had never before known. Yet not to find a welcome euthanasy had he returned to Swanneck. To sink into a lethargy of sorrow was foreign to his nature and intention. It was not conceivable to him that

Jack could find just treatment unless he himself were able to detach duty from cold moral responsibility and clothe it more bounteously. The brotherly heart in him refused to recognize other than brotherly relations. His sole force was self-discipline—not the discipline of others, individually or collectively—a work which is so highly esteemed among men.

When he reached home he found Jack fast asleep. Unwilling to disturb him, he went outside, and, sitting down upon a bench that stood against the house, watched the glory fade from the earth. The fine perspective of blue sky and opalescent cloud beyond the misty mountains, the dewy brightness, the mellowing sunshine, the flickering shadows, the dreamy purple veil of haze covering every deformity with deceptive grace, all passed away. Nothing remained but a cold white sky, a rugged mass of trees about dark, rugged mountains, bleak, stern,

desolate. Thus life appears when its inner joy has fled; thus the actual when parted from the ideal.

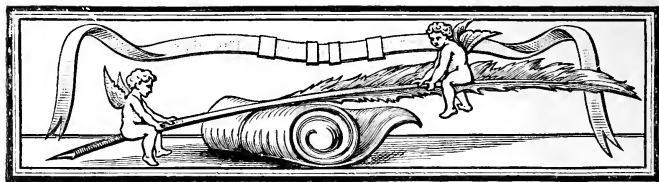
If we think of it, the height and summit of our happiness did not lie where we expected to find it. It was not in the pleasures from which we anticipated and did actually derive delight; nor in those successes to which desire and circumstance alike contributed; nor in the declaration of mutual love; nor in the support and encouragements of friendship. These, indeed, lead to the third heaven, but attain not to the seventh, for on all of these the suspended sword is ever ready to fall. But there are days, distinguishable in no other way as red-letter days, when the spiritual life receives a sudden access of vitalizing power. Then nature speaks to us in veriest simplicity. The truth which escaped unnoticed reveals itself with all the joy of discovery. The thought we have long been laboriously chasing comes

unmasked with all the force and freshness of intuition. The design which lay in us, dim and vague as a dream, springs into being, acquires the power of making itself articulate, palpable. The significance of things we can only express by symbols manifests itself with transparent clearness, so that soul looks through the windows of soul, and heart unfolds itself to heart. These are the moments when the gods visit us, when human happiness reaches the verge of ideal felicity. These are the only really eminent and memorable moments in life, the creative moments from which the mighty works in all the arts, or the splendid triumphs and sacrifices of patriotism, philosophy or love, have been derived.

As he sat, sunk in reverie, Wrayburn looked back on many such moments—some near, others far distant—and he was thankful. Ungrudgingly he gave cheerful praise, and felt again the full stature of a man arising

within. The supine, vapourish spirit left him. He had made silent sacrifices that no one knew about except himself, and his fondest delights had been hurled from him in the hour of enjoyment. But those moments of exaltation were all his own, could never be lost or relinquished. They were the secret gift of the requiting One. Laying his cap on the bench beside him, he let the old happy, silent adoration of the Most High, who "dwelleth not in temples made with hands," take full possession of him.

An idle man, who sits hour after hour till darkness encompasses him, may be only an idle man, thinking of nothing in particular ; or, with a superb extravagance of humility, he may be breaking his alabaster box most precious, which shall presently distil its purifying essence through his heart and brain, till it penetrates to the lives of others, who feel the subtle influence without comprehending its source.



CHAPTER II.

THE next morning, when Jack entered, he found Wrayburn standing near the window, cleaning a gun—the table spread, and all things ready for breakfast.

“Good morning, Jack,” he said cheerfully. “I hope you slept well. Breakfast is quite ready.”

The first thing Jack observed was the change in his friend's attire. He was dressed for work now, in a rough tweed suit that was well built enough, but well worn also, clump-soled boots and leather gaiters, a grey flannel shirt, with turn-down collar of the same, with a red silk tie knotted under it. The little

point of bright colour gave an artistic touch to the workmanlike costume.

They were rather silent at first, for Jack was hungry and Wrayburn a little abstracted. At this early hour there was no sunshine in the room which fronted the west, but the outside world was steeped in a glory of sunshine. There had been heavy rain overnight, and now pearls and diamonds and amethysts were glittering on every inch of green. The neglected, trailing branches of a pear tree, which Wrayburn had tried to train against the house, were loosely wafted about by the breeze, and shook down a sparkling little shower of crystal drops, mingled with white petals, whenever a rougher wind flung the wet and tremulous leaves against the window-panes.

When the more pressing needs of his appetite were satisfied, Jack became conversationally inclined. "How long do you say you have lived here?" he asked.

“Between six and seven years altogether,” Wrayburn replied.

“Don’t you think you have rather thrown yourself away here—at least, that you might have done better elsewhere?”

“I knew you would ask me that question sooner or later—every one does,” Wrayburn made answer, with a resigned kind of smile.

“Because it is so very natural,” Jack said hastily. “A man of your education is thrown away here.”

“I never felt thrown away; and I may have my own ideas touching that same ‘doing better,’ you know,” said Wrayburn, who was in one of his perverse moods.

“This house business is so odious,” quoth Jack. “It wouldn’t cost much to get a Chinaman, would it?”

“Possibly not; but why should I set on a Chinaman to do for me what I am quite able to do?”

“To save trouble. Most people keep servants.”

“So should I, if I needed help; but then I don't, and I dislike excessively that system of keeping one set of people exclusively for the convenience of another set. If it is necessary for a single individual to create such a heap of what is called ‘menial work,’ I don't see why he should not take a full share of his own manual labour.”

“That sounds rather odd. Imagine a duke serving up his own dinner, or an M.P. blacking his own boots before sitting down to prepare for a great speech!”

“There are many M.P.s, Jack, much better qualified to black boots than to make great speeches. You must not confound the rhetoric of a lithe politician, fencing with his opponents, with the memorable occasion and utterance which constitute a great speech.”

“I don't know; but I dislike incongruity,” said Jack. “The world couldn't go on if

men got mixed up in their work like that."

"The world could go on all right, dear boy, under vastly different conditions from those which you and I think the correct thing, no doubt. 'Share and share alike' is a very good rule, but some of the simplest rules are the hardest to follow. We are selfish and fond of display, and therefore we arrange the world's routine so as to gratify ourselves. It was not, I fancy, for a mere example of humility that our Lord washed the disciples' feet or gathered up the fragments of the miraculous feasts. There was sound economy in it too."

Jack remained silent, but he looked at his friend with a slightly surprised and expectant expression.

"The honest people among the Socialists talk about the dignity of labour," Wrayburn continued, "and seek to raise all workers by teaching them to feel a real pleasure in their

toil. This would be all very well were it not for that specialism which dooms every man to keep to his own work only, and not get 'mixed up,' as you call it. Think of the waste and repair that constantly go on in every great city, and the numbers of people who are engaged in dealing with one or other in their many forms. A silversmith, a cabinet-maker, or a potter might feel a hearty pleasure in his work, sufficient to make him fling up his cap and follow the band crying up the dignity of labour. But the men who grub in old drains, or who have to deal with the refuse of filthy tenement houses, or the cleaning of slaughter-houses, or other equally beastly employment, how can they put their whole heart into such work and feel satisfied with the amount of dignity falling to their lot? Such work is necessary, you will say; the world couldn't go on without it being done by some one. True; but only very animalized men will undertake it, from its

very nature. Raise their mental and moral tone, and they will very soon 'do better' for themselves, and you must seek a deeper depth again where the feelings are less nice."

"I confess I don't quite follow you," said Jack, modestly. "If drains are out of order one must send for a man who understands what is to be done."

"I am only suggesting objectionable employments," said Wrayburn. "If you and I were set to help in stoking a big steamer I don't fancy we should be so overpowered by the joy and dignity of the thing as to choose it for a livelihood."

"We must have firemen."

"And if we must have them, we must also be content to see upon them the evil results of the conditions under which they work."

"I don't see how things can be altered," said Jack, after a little pause; "at least, in civilized countries."

“I’m sick of the very word ‘civilization,’” Wrayburn said. “People might at least be reasonable. They jump up on platforms, and, with very good intentions, no doubt, favour us with a lot of fluid thought, or half-thoughts, that would have condensed into better sense had they given it time, and thought things out a little further before speaking. If they don’t try to raise the manual labourers, they’ve got uneasy consciences; and if they do try to raise them and educate them, the toilers go on strike first thing all round, and there’s the very deuce in the labour world.”

“I don’t see how things can be altered,” said Jack, hopelessly.

Wrayburn hesitated a little. “What is right for me would not necessarily be right for you,” he said. “You must form your own opinions about things as you go along. I should not like to try to colour a young lad’s mind. Every one must follow his own

star, and will do so, whether or no, in the end."

"But you have views of your own, Mr. Wrayburn, and a star of your own. Where has it led you?"

"It has led me to act upon the supposition that all life is a kind of allegory," Wrayburn replied, still in a hesitating manner. "Humanity bore its cross, and suffered upon it, in the person of Divinity. To this day the type holds good—the higher must seek the lower and make it one with itself, not by dragging it up to its own impossible heights, but by shouldering its cross and sharing its labours and temptations actually, instead of by proxy. If we want to be the greatest we must first be the least, must touch and handle with our own hands the humiliations of other men of low estate, the grovelling, disagreeable things of life. But the greatness is spiritual, not temporal; and that is the point where men get divided and cannot

come together again, but each works out his own plan, fully believing *he* is right at least; and the Almighty, who is the true skilled workman, takes all the misshapen and misdirected plans and makes them fit into His own orderly design. In other words, Jack, the more refined, intelligent, and educated we are, the more it is our bounden duty to spend a few hours daily at the brickmaking in Egypt."

Jack shook his head. "It would make complete confusion," he said resolutely. "You would never get people to see it either, and one man here and there could not hope to change the whole face of society."

"When we say 'society,' Jack, we mean ourselves duplicated—nothing more. If we see a thing plainly we must just act upon it, without troubling whether society is going to back us up or leave us in the lurch."

Just then the door opened, and a swarthy, common-looking little man entered. He

made straight for Wrayburn, who rose and shook hands with him.

“Wellh, wellh, Mr. Wrayburn, how are ye, how are ye whateffer? Ant verra gladt I was las’ night when they toldt me you wass come home,” cried the little man, treating Wrayburn’s arm as a pump-handle. “So I thort ye wouldn’t take it amiss if I just come roundt an’ toldt ye so.”

“Thanks very much. Will you join us at breakfast, Mr. Morgan? This is my new chum, John Lansdell.”

Morgan transferred the pump-handle movement to Jack, and sat down in the chair Wrayburn placed for him, first depositing his hat under it.

“And what news have you for me?” asked his host. “I have hardly heard anything yet. Any changes in Swanneck?”

“Wellh, then, there are a fewh. No deaths, God be thank! but two more subjects for her Majesty, one in Fanshawe’s family

and one in my ownh. Young Brennan's marryt, only las' week, to Allen Forsyth's darter. You know him; he farms over beyond Quentin."

"He used to be in the Hudson Bay Company. Yes, I know him—a steady man, with a comfortable homekeeping family."

"Iss sure; and Brennan's got a nice little home to pring her to."

"How are the Penrhyns?"

"Joggin' alongst as effer. Young George wass gone over to the Maitland Ranch; it's gettin' to be a pig thingh now, an' payin' wellh too."

"And the McFarlanes?"

"Oh, Mack's wellh, an' doin' wellh, neverh fearh him. He had the best oat crop las' yearh any one here's yet raisedt. But the school's in a verra badt way."

"Have you any teacher now?"

"We hadt a youngh manh what wass

been studyin' for the Baptist min'stry, but his health was broke. He came to Quentin to see a friendt, for change, and we got himh on here. He stayed eight muntz. Eh! but we was loth to part him! He was just one of the Lord's ownh, a pillar of grace. It wouldt haf surprisedt you for to hear him."

"I've no doubt," Wrayburn replied dryly.

Morgan fixed his black eyes intently on him. He was not exactly the sort of man to whom an "awakening" discourse could be addressed with impunity, yet Morgan was too conscientious to let a soul-saving opportunity be lost.

"I hope ye've changed since ye've beenh away," he began, rather doubtfully.

"Changed?" laughed the other. "Not in the least; just the same old good-for-nothing as ever. But never mind that; tell me about the rest."

"You heardt ast Fanshawe's startit a saw-mill?"

“No. Where and when did he start it?”

“At a goodt place, about a mile or so down river from here, where’s a nice fallh of watter.”

“Very convenient. You won’t have to go all the way to Quentin now.”

“We’s go to Quentin still,” Morgan said significantly, and added after a moment, “Ye see there’s beenh rows over’t, and none of us won’t deal with him tillh he gets shut o’ that Chinese gangh. He’s gone and brot a lot of Chinese into the place to run his lumber camp, ast he’d no rights to do. So we’s go still to Quentin.”

“You think he should employ white labour?”

“He should whateffer,” said Morgan, energetically, “an’ not pring down effery manh’s wages to satisfy his ownh greedt. But he’s so arbit’ry; he hast no patience. He hadt white men, and quarrelt and quarrelt with them, till he gave themh all the

sack one dayh, and got Chinese. So his workn't cheaper now."

"And more peaceably, surely."

"Ay, but white men can't be treatit like Chinese. Ant labour's dearh here, where there's few men whateffer; and he's no right to forct down the market with a run, and to standt out against his ownh. He's double the number of those heathen."

"What does he care, so long as they toe the line for him? They're very good workers too. He'll get more out of them, and he is only taking a leaf out of the big capitalists' books."

"Then you defendt him?"

"I don't wish to express any opinion. 'Le péril jaune' is evidently the burning question in Swanneck just now," said Wrayburn, as he rose from the table.

Morgan, who had crooked a foot round each front leg of his chair, extracted his limbs by apparent dislocation.

“Wellh,” he said, picking up his hat, “I’ll say goodt marning, Mr. Wrayburn, ant I’m verra gladt to see ye back againh—verra gladt, so I amh.”

When Morgan had gone, Jack selected one of the fowling-pieces and waited outside the house, until Wrayburn joined him with the rest of the shooting-gear.

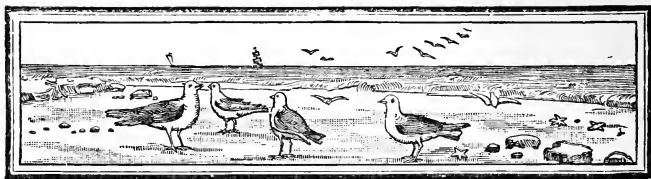
“What is the meaning of that ? ” he asked, pointing to the inscription over the door.

“This is my castle, and I’m the poor devil.”

“You don’t look like it ; you’re jolly enough.”

“And mean to be jolly. If two men chum together, it doesn’t do for one of them to be half his time in the dumps,” said Wrayburn, whose youthful heart retained the hope that some of its lost sunshine would return again.





CHAPTER III.

WHEN Sunday came round, Jack found it dull, and, being thrown on his own resources, and missing the conventional tone of an English Sunday, was very much bored.

“I should think people soon run to seed here,” he said to Wrayburn. “There’s no church or anything to pull them into shape.”

“There’s an afternoon service at the school-house, where they pull each other into shape pretty vigorously.”

“Who officiates?”

“They all do, I believe. I was only there once.”

“Why don’t you go, if the rest do?”

“ Because I love the world and the things of the world the whole seven days, whereas they only love them six days, and hate them fervently on the seventh.”

Jack felt repelled by the flippant answer. There was an ironical element in Wrayburn that he did not like, for nothing hurts the self-love of people who have a very good opinion of themselves so much as the least hint of sarcasm.

In the afternoon he strolled over to the lumber camp. Not many men, white or coloured, were there. A few Chinamen were cooking their rice and curry at little fires in the open air, or mending clothes, or smoking, or playing some small gambling game. They took no notice of the stranger, not even looking up from their employments as he passed through their midst. Chinamen are not supposed to be employed as lumberers ; there is a sort of unwritten law of exclusion. With such a limited public to

combat, Fanshawe had dared to partially transgress this law, and had earned for himself any amount of hatred and malice in consequence.

All the first month in Swanneck was a holiday for Jack. Until Wrayburn could make some definite arrangement for the boy's future, he had the run of the place. This suited him exactly. Fishing and shooting absorbed his whole attention. From long practice Wrayburn had become a crack shot, and good-naturedly yielding to the boy's sportsmanlike proclivities, he went much farther afield, and hunted much bigger game than he was in the habit of troubling himself about. Jack would have been content to continue on those lines—prowling about the wilderness, learning to become a mighty hunter. But in such a pastime Wrayburn felt little delight himself, and no wish to encourage his companion. Woodcraft also found favour with Jack, who soon

learned the fling of the axe, and could bring down his tree with strength if not with science. But gardening did not commend itself to him. In his opinion it was dull work, only fit for clodpoles. While the other trimmed and planted, he would wander about the woods with his gun, having a "cock-shy" at every living thing unwise enough to come within the range of his uncertain aim.

On one of these days, as Wrayburn was sauntering about his garden, he espied a young girl approaching, shading the sun from her eyes with her hand. She stood still when their eyes met, and he went slowly towards her.

"Father says he'll be down to your house to-night about eight," the girl said to him. "He was there before, an' ye were away from home."

"I shall be at home," he began, then paused, and asked abruptly, "Aren't you Agnes McFarlane?"

“Yes, I am Agnes,” she replied, blushing rosily.

“How you have grown ! I should not have known you. It was your Scotch accent I recognized.”

“Oh yes, I was so little ; but I’ve grown a deal this last year, and I’m sixteen now.”

The little hoyden he remembered, with “kilted coats” and flying mass of yellow curls, had shot up into a tall, modest-looking girl, with long dress and neatly braided hair. She was shy but friendly, and very pretty. He marvelled how anything so sweet, simple, and natural could have grown in the frozen atmosphere of that stern Presbyterian home. It was difficult to realize that she might in time become a hard-grained, hatchet-faced woman, like the mother to whom she bore a trace of resemblance.

“I feel sure you’ve grown good and lovely as well as tall,” he said kindly, putting his hand gently beneath her chin, and turning

up the youthful face to look at it. "Little Soldanella!" he added, smiling, and bending for a moment kissed her blooming cheek.

From thoughtlessness, or the habit of looking back, men do such foolish things, never thinking that a poor little girl, whose sole background is that of childhood, can but look forward. Agnes was removed from Wrayburn by nearly twenty years. To him—still a young man himself—she was but a child. At the moment he only remembered she had been Mary's favourite pupil. Moved by some tender impulse, for Mary's sake he kissed her and thought no more about it.

"How is it I've not seen you before?" he asked. "Where have you been hiding yourself?"

"I was at the Forsyths', and only came home yesterday. I was one of Queenie's bridesmaids."

"And who may Queenie be?"

“Queenie Forsyth that was; she’s Mrs. Brennan now.”

“Is that it? I thought I heard Kit Brennan calling his wife Victore-ya.”

“That is her name; but they nearly always call her Queenie at home.”

For some minutes she stood chattering to him about her friend’s wedding, he encouraging her chatter while studying her looks and manner. And poor vain Agnes went home with her head in the clouds, wondering how it was that until now the comeliness of Wrayburn’s manhood had escaped her notice; wondering why he had kissed her and looked at her so; wondering if she were really as pretty as he said; for she as little understood that he used the word “lovely” only in the sense of lovable as she understood why he had called her “Soldanella.” Such vile seed does a man sow on a summer day by a touch too tender, or a smile from caressing eyes.

Jack was not within when McFarlane came that evening, but he entered soon afterwards. A book lay open on Wrayburn's knee, but instead of reading he was slowly twisting his moustache and looking before him.

"You seem thoughtful to-night," said Jack.

"It is of you I am thinking," Wrayburn replied. "McFarlane has been here, and we've just completed an agreement. You are to become his pupil from the first of next month."

The colour rose in Jack's cheek as he felt the Rubicon was crossed. But what lay beyond?

"He's the only man here," Wrayburn went on, "who does really farm, and really understands his business. In his own way he's conscientious too. But he wishes us to understand that at first—for a few months, perhaps—you'll be nothing more than an ordinary farm labourer. He was very stiff

about it, evidently unwilling to have anything to do with a gentleman amateur. Don't be offended with such plain-speaking, Jack. It's as well to know the sort of man he is, that you may learn to pull in harness with him."

"It's very good of you to take so much trouble about me," said Jack. But there was more formality and less of heartiness in the tone than Wrayburn liked.

"If you feel dissatisfied," he said, "or if you think we could make some better arrangement, don't scruple to say so. I must keep my promises to your mother; but I want to see you contented and happy here. If there's one way better than another let's have that way, and tear this up before it is too late."

"I'm sure you've done the best you could," Jack replied. "I've not thought of anything different—at present."

Now, in his heart, although that agreement

had been made with McFarlane, and money had passed between them on the strength of it, Wrayburn did not believe Jack had any real intention of learning farming, or of sticking to it. To get to America it was necessary he should advance some plausible reason; and what more plausible than farming? So many young fellows had gone to Canada and done well there. The history of these successful youths during the period of having "the starch taken out of them" appeared to have been published in some separate volume, to which Jack had not had access or else designedly ignored. Everything in Canada would come easily, if not intuitively; and while too young to enter upon land of his own he could be learning colonial methods of farming. All those hunting, mining, and cow-boy experiences he had first meant to make his own; later on the land question could come in. At starting he had felt quite confident in his

own powers to secure his own ends. Only let him set foot in Canada, and he would work the oracle. But to be shown a written agreement, to be told he was forthwith to become a farm labourer, was depressing in the extreme.

Wrayburn felt sorry for the boy, guessing what was in his mind. He had been softly reared himself, and, mindful of his own youth, wished to drive this boy with a snaffle, while his insight assured him a tight curb was not only what Jack's character required, but what the world would ultimately apply.

This conviction inclined him all the more to lenience, when, after a while, he began to have a very bad time of it with Jack and McFarlane. They did not pull well together ; they could not be said to pull at all, there was such inveterate antagonism between them. Both persisted in dragging Wrayburn into all their quarrels and making him their umpire. Whenever he interfered he in-

variably gave offence to either side. If he said, "Settle it between yourselves, and don't worry me," such indifference left both free to increase their aggressions. He was vexed with McFarlane for his hardness, while he despised Jack for his want of pith, and for so often showing himself in the character of a snob.

When McFarlane and he had wrangled over the clearing of cattle-sheds, the splitting of firewood, or some other bone of contention, and had "slanged" one another with great warmth, Jack found it essential for his dignity to reassert himself elsewhere. Having made himself as dandified as possible, adorned his hands with rings, provided himself with cigarettes in a silver case, he would go down to spend the evening at the store, which answered all the purposes of a club to Swanneck. There he would talk to the men assembled with patronizing *bonhomie*, enlarging on his schooldays and

his relatives ; not obtrusively boasting, but contriving to let it be known that he was a person of no small consequence. Knowing that Wrayburn would never let the cat out of the bag, it was quite safe to talk incidentally about his fine friends, and to drag in the names of their country houses. Their names alone were known to Jack. But even names can be handled very advantageously. Undoubtedly Swanneck thought all the better of Jack for having titled people and bishops and generals for his uncles and his cousins and his aunts, though privately they reviled him a little, as people who have no grand relations feel bound to revile those who have.

Naturally Jack was less eager to flourish the branches of the maternal genealogical tree. His affection for his mother was an affection that lived very well at a low temperature, and his gratitude to her sought no open acknowledgment of her goodness.

She was alive, living in London, which sounds vague but respectable, and she needed no further comment.

Gradually more and more of his evenings were spent at the store. He liked his friend well enough, but soon tired of his society. Although he held the settlers in perfect contempt, his restless, active, practical temperament found more in common with them than with one whose turn of mind had a sort of indolent repose arising from thoughtful and elegant tastes. It was not surprising that one so self-sufficing, so well equipped, as was Wrayburn, for a solitary life, should have drifted into solitude. Yet he was not unsociable, and had done his best to provide amusement for Jack, often with extreme boredom to himself. But if their tastes were dissimilar, and the lad could find more congenial company elsewhere, he was free to choose.

McFarlane, observant of Jack's tendencies,

and ready as ever to play the part of public moralist, was not slack in expostulating with Wrayburn. He rated him soundly for his lax rule, over-indulgence, and general incompetence for the guidance of youth. Having expostulated, and relieved his conscience, he set himself to investigate.

As a rule, men are not malicious. Women are ; yet not so much from real malice as from mischief—the Eve-like curiosity innate in the creatures, the love of setting the ball a-rolling to see what will come of it.

McFarlane *was* malicious ; he was greatly bothered with his refractory pupil, and still bore the old secret grudge against Wrayburn's supposed prosperity. He began to talk in his peculiar way to his wife, with hints and inuendoes, and naturally his wife repeated such talk to her neighbours. All eyes were upon Jack at this time. The public mind was not made up about him. In any narrow community, having few

interests outside the daily routine, a new-comer's affairs are full of sweet new grain which must be threshed out thoroughly. It was odd, they thought, that one with so many relatives had not been provided with a guardian from among them, instead of being left to the care of a stranger;—for Jack always intimated that Wrayburn was his guardian. It was strange, too, that Wrayburn, who valued liberty beyond everything, should return from England with an insolent, unruly boy for a house-mate. Evidently Jack's inheritance could not be worth much, or he would not be so silent about it, for his tales never lost in the telling. It looked queer that he seemed to know so little about his father. For in his nervous dread of that low marriage being brought to light, Jack had conveniently forgotten nearly all about his father except his good family. It was further observed by these lynx-eyed critics that, although he

spoke freely of his brother, he seldom mentioned his mother, and then always with restraint, as if something lay behind. There was a mystery. Wrayburn's private affairs *had* always been mysterious. Long as he had lived there, no one knew who he really was, or what his position was, or who this boy was now. Could any women endure to have a mystery in their midst without making endless conjectures and suggestions for its solution ?

Little by little they came to the conclusion that Jack's father was a myth ; that Jack was only "crammed ;" that *Mrs.* Lansdell belonged no doubt to some good family, but probably had made "a slip ;" that, instead of the clerical stalking-horse, Wrayburn himself was perhaps Jack's father. On this supposition it might be easy to explain his long, lonely years here, his sudden visit to England, his consideration for *Mrs.* Lansdell's sons, his pretence of guardianship.

These were the incumbrances left upon his hands from some youthful folly. Well, at least he was not a hypocrite ; he had never attended service ; there was that much grace in him ! Mary rose in their estimation, for of course she must have found he had some one with stronger claims upon him, and therefore would not marry him. How shocking to think of so much depravity lying behind such a harmless-looking exterior ! Separate fragments of the puzzle which had so long tantalized the inquiring spirit of Swanneck dropped one by one into their places, until the whole was plain as a pike-staff. In his horror of the plumber's daughter coming into evidence, Jack's tale lacked coherence. Every hiatus was pounced upon, every discrepancy made to fit. Swanneck gave itself up to scandal and lived upon slander, while the only ones whom it could affect knew nothing about it.



CHAPTER IV.

THAT summer was the most miserable one Wrayburn had ever known—all azure had disappeared from his sky, not a gleam of sunshine remained.

It was what is popularly called “a bad season,” a season of extremes ; not like that equable and genial year of Mary’s advent. Blazing, parching drought succeeded a cold, late spring. A protracted period of heavy rains following came too late to revive growth in the roots dwindling in the scorched ground. Out-of-doors nothing was to be heard but grumblings and forebodings ; in-doors there

was the ceaseless November dripping of Jack's peevish discontent.

Jack was more than a thorn in the flesh to Wrayburn—he was a perfect hair-shirt. Dissatisfied and unhappy himself, he was determined to make his companion as wretched as himself. He did not know his own mind, and could never explain what he really wanted, so revenged himself by finding fault with everything. Insolent as he was to McFarlane, he dared not play off on the stern Scotchman all the “superfluity of naughtiness” with which he favoured Wrayburn. No Gibeonite worked harder for encroaching Israel than did the guardian of this exacting boy, who had a grim glee in seeing to what lengths of provocation he could go. His dependence upon Wrayburn's bounty he chose to regard as his pet grievance, and never ceased to deplore the hardship of such a lot. It was his favourite among all the barbed missiles which he

delighted in slinging at his friend, paying him off for that accursed "bounty." Wrayburn had such a strong desire to prevent the humiliating sense of dependence being felt that such taunts were the surest way of stinging him. The boy suspected there was a lurking devil in Wrayburn's temper that would "hew him to gobbets" if it once broke loose; but as it appeared pretty strongly bound, to watch its eyes flash, its teeth grind, its red blood coursing at boiling-point, while never a word came from it other than words of kindness, gave a pleasurable excitement to a daring, mischief-loving nature. Often Wrayburn wished with all his heart that he could ship him off to England there and then. But it was not in his power to rid himself so easily of an incubus. He had undertaken a thankless duty; honour and obligation demanded its continuance. Upon his aching heart, chafed and worn with its own secret sorrow, these miserable

contentions and endless paltry worries acted like friction on a raw wound.

Had he been less preoccupied with his own affairs at this time, Wrayburn must have noticed the strange frequency with which Agnes McFarlane crossed his path.

If he strolled down by the river towards the saw-mill he was sure to see Agnes hovering in the background, with two or three little toddling Fanshawes. If, in returning from a day's shooting, he halted on his way home at Mrs. Brennan's door to unsling from his shoulder a brace of grouse, or of wild-duck, as an offering to the young bride, Agnes was certain to be sitting with her friend. If her mother sent her to borrow some small household requisite, it was at his door she was sure to come making bashful demand. If he went over to the islands in the lake, four times out of six he was fated to meet her, pulling her little boat with a pair of light sculls. On such occasions

he felt bound to return with her to help her up the rocky steps he had cut for Mary's convenience; to stay awhile with her, gathering blossoms and berries, and to bring her back safely in his own boat, towing hers after them.

She was never forward or presuming; in fact, her first diffidence only increased with time, so that often she had hardly a word to say. By surrounding him with a vague yet absorbing interest, and letting her thoughts dwell constantly upon his looks and words, the foolish girl had fallen in love with him. All the preposterous gossip and slander she had overheard had only stimulated her interest, and fastened her mind upon him with a very unhealthy attention.

Not so very long ago she would have been overjoyed with his company to the lake-islands because he could reach up to the best berries ripening nearest the sun; could climb the trees to catch the "wee

hoolets," or stretch over the rocks to get the water-hens' eggs for her. Nimbly as a goat she would skip over all the steep places, careless of his proffered hand, noisy and mirthful like the innocent child she was.

Thanks to scandal-mongers, childhood had kissed hands to her and would return no more. She was content to follow him sedate and silent now, holding out her apron for his gatherings, pensive as lonely Ruth among the foreign gleaners. The very gentleness and quietude of the girl had an attraction for Wrayburn that made him partial to her company. Often he was moody and silent himself, although he talked a good deal with her, in a negligent fashion. When she was with him he liked to have her there; when absent, he neither missed her nor gave her more than a passing thought. He was perfectly composed and unconscious; she, overwhelmed with consciousness—ashamed of what she knew, or believed she knew, about him,

yet longing to hear more, to sound his hidden depths with heedful plummet. Had those senseless gossips held their foolish tongues, possibly Agnes might still have cherished a soft preference for Wrayburn. But it would have been a wholesome, girlish affection, not this Sodom-apple she had tasted in unwise haste that she might be as a god, knowing good and evil. Already her experience was that "if joy is love, pain is joy." It had come to that pass with Agnes that she only lived when in Wrayburn's presence; the rest of the day was so much cumbersome time to be got over as speedily as possible. But it is not a happy thing to burn life's candle so wastefully, using up all its substance in a few poor moments of brilliant flame.

There was enough Scotch shrewdness in the girl to convince her that any desire of hers for Wrayburn must needs be "the desire of the moth for the star,"—something

remote and unattainable as the arch of heaven. Instinctively she felt her love would be one of Nature's wasted, unfertile seeds, an immature, formless, silent thing, never to emerge from darkness or know a flowering time. Unable to read her own heart, she was always a little sad, without well knowing why.

Little as she understood herself, still less could she understand, or even know more than the merest fringe—what might be called the outskirts and suburbs—of the man who chatted with her when he had nothing better to do.

Some people are entirely subdued by great misfortune; their mercury sinks to zero without any capability of rising again; they become permanently depressed and relaxed. Others, of stronger vitality, press through dark depths to the sunny surface again by their own innate buoyancy. These carry their sorrows lightly, rather as hidden

and unsuspected wounds, like those honourable scars which the old Roman veterans only discovered to the gaze of the public when seeking its suffrages. Fortunately for himself Wrayburn possessed the elastic temperament. His animal spirits were never excessively high, but they were equable and quickly recruited ; for the pain of a continual heartache may at length be borne almost unconsciously.

Sometimes he wondered what made him so restless,—why he wearied of Swanneck, and longed to breathe the air beyond its enclosing amphitheatre of mountains, when he well knew that from a distance no other spot on earth would seem to him so dear, nor offer a like repose ; why he, who hated cities, often panted for the life of cities, its strong pulsations and mighty reverberations, its ceaseless flux and reflux ; why, when doing one thing, he impatiently wished to be doing something different ;

why this harassing alteration had taken place in his former contented ease,—until he remembered that he was unhappy, and therein lay the simple reason of the change; a feeling of anger, dissatisfaction, or astonishment mingled with all his thoughts.

At most unlikely moments some trivial scene or incident from his brief married life flashed back upon him with a vividness that stunned like lightning, and disclosed all manner of cloudy openings which afterwards he vainly tried to traverse or recall. Such sudden pauses filled him with a restless uneasiness that made him an involuntary casuist, for they opened up a tormenting series of intricate questions leading off into interminable subtleties. When his mind settled down after one of these disturbing interludes, he was conscious of a fresh scathe that wrung his very soul with pain, or numbed him in a deathlike apathy. That

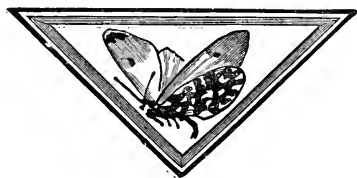
bird was not hatched whose pinion could fan the fever of his wound.

He railed against a too-severely cloistered love that made every day a fast-day. Easy is it for the monk who has never left his cell to continue in severe monastic obedience ; but not easily shall he who has once mingled with the crowd, and known the sweets of liberty, resume the cowl, the sandals, and the tonsure. These fill him with a "melancholic fire" that compels an unhappy man to become, in his own despite, a merciless flagellant.

As of old Wrayburn braced all his latent energies and turned their forces against himself ; but he suffered, as individuals and nations do, from an unfulfilled destiny. Again, and yet again, he made surrender, while reserving the inner belief that what he surrendered was his own development. He had never known any strong desire for domestic life. His passion for Christina

had been a fool's paradise, in which he lived for the present only, regardless of past or future. When he fell in love with Mary, for her sake he forfeited his freedom and made a joyful sacrifice. Afterwards, when he lived serene in sacred wedded love, when he had learned how sweet is the interchange of private affection, and the indulgence of nascent and genial sympathies, he felt himself admirably suited to the position. How much did it add to his pain now that he knew himself by such clear internal evidence! Nature had plainly intended him for the founder of a family—faithful husband, devoted father; but the interference of an evil influence, by cleaving nature's growth to the roots, had dissipated her intention. By the careless laws of nature he was free to develop himself as he chose; by a selecter law than nature's he was bound to give with his own hand the finishing stroke to that savage cleft.

There were times when fits of downright fury and desperation seized him, though he was too proud and strong-willed to acknowledge even to himself how much he suffered. Life had lost its savour to him ; he was eating his heart out every day, but made no sign. With the exception of being a little thinner, there were few external traces of the violence of that shock which had left his mature life incurably dislocated, and himself unhappy in the last degree.





CHAPTER V.

AS the year drew to its close, Jack found himself in the happy situation of that poor old Ned for whom there was no more work. With great goodwill he prepared to "lay down the shovel and the hoe," and left the kindly fruits of the earth to do what they liked with themselves under their snowy winter mantle. Until spring returned to revive all growth his work was almost a sinecure.

During the whole of January and part of February the inmates of the *château* never saw out of their windows. The little

log-house was almost buried in snow. As the short days slid into the long nights a frightful silence weighed upon life with a strange eerie oppression. Instead of water great blocks of ice were brought in to fill the kettles, and the day's milk made its appearance in the likeness of marble cubes. Frozen water, frozen milk, frozen butter, frozen meat, frozen life everywhere—a total suspension of every force save that of frost. In such a mountainous district, when the wind rose with the snowstorm, the enormous drifts were terrible, and entailed unceasing labour. The whole winter in this region was one continual combat between man and the elements. Jack marvelled how Wrayburn had ever settled in such a place, or why he remained there. Yet his own spirits rose with the whirlwind that sent the snowflakes sweeping in a blinding commotion, and his heart leaped at the sound of the blast that crashed and roared through the awful forest,

heaving, tossing, and bending it in a mighty wrestling-match of snowy giants.

Jack was no poet, articulate or inarticulate. Yet many a time, when he stood at the door at night, his glance idly roving from serene heights of gleaming mountains that pierced the intense dark-blue profundity, to the clear expanse of glittering starry sky that seemed to crackle and scintillate with frost, and *listened* through a rarefied atmosphere to the intense silence of the vast, motionless forest, every bough weighed down with its crisp plume of snow, then some deeper and truer sense of nature's wondrous soul sank into his thoughtless mind. Those pure splendours of glistening earth and coruscating firmament, and that indescribable depth of silence, lifted him, as it were, above the world, and filled him with the melancholy awe of utmost stillness, distance, and isolation. At such times a chord in his heart was touched which seldom vibrated, and he ceased to wonder

that Wrayburn loved this strange, wild place, or that he was "odd." Communings such as his must have been were calculated to produce oddity in one who lived solitary amid this solemn, unbroken silence, this wrapt expectant pause and hush of nature; alone in a white, weird, unearthlike world, looking up, as from a cell in some crystal orb, to that dark flashing sky, at times illuminated by "the dust of meteors and falling stars."

But Jack did not always feel lonely. There were social evenings at the settlers' houses—convivial supper parties and lively breakdowns—mirth and music in abundance, from fiddle, banjo, and concertina. Sometimes they would make up a sleighing party and go over in a body to Auburn, or on a fine night the Auburnites would lay sudden siege to Swanneck's hospitality. The jollity was rather of the pothouse kind, rough and noisy, though for the most part the people

were sober enough, and only boisterous. Rough or not, Jack liked it, and never failed to put in an appearance when any fun was going on. He was determined to have what fun he could before the ploughing, and sowing, and general work began again.

There was in Quentin a certain wooden structure known as the North Star, kept by one Schmidl, of unknown nationality, who spoke many languages after a fashion, had served in the German army and known the inside of a Russian prison; had been all over Europe and a good part of America; who drank all drinks at all hours of the day and night with apparent impunity, for if he was never perfectly sober, he was never really drunk. He was good-humoured, greasy, and corpulent, smoked a huge porcelain pipe; was suspected of having lent a hand in some Anarchist bomb-throwing conspiracy, and of having left his country for his country's good. He had no religion, no morals, no

conscience, no politics, no hard words, and no opinion of any one. In addition to his drinking bar he had a gambling saloon and theatre—a barbaric affair, where breakdowns and variety entertainments were given whenever the necessary artists could be got together. During winter so little was going on in this temple of the Muses that old Schmidl could leave those two efficient aides-de-camp—his son, and the lady who did him the honour of standing forward as his wife—in charge of the store, while he conveyed his best whisky—warranted to kill at fifty yards—on dog-sledges to those remoter portions of her Majesty's dominion less happily provided than Quentin, with materials for "the flowing bowl," or the means of a speedy quietus.

The North Star, more commonly known briefly as "Schmidl's," was much favoured by trappers, lumberers, and ranchmen from the few lonely and widely separated ranches,

unsuccessful prospectors, wandering miners, scattering their hardly-earned "pile" like seed as they went, stray sportsmen in search of big game, and unlucky or disheartened settlers who had taken to drink, and said of Schmidl's—"Alabama! here will we plant our standard!"

Schmidl's was a kind of hotel, too. In the interior was a large room, with a large stove in the centre, and bunks like those in a ship's fore-castle around the walls. For an extortionate sum any gentleman could find a night's repose in one of these bunks, provided he brought with him his own rug, and was possessed of an armour-plated cuticle that would enable him to sleep while "the foe were sullenly firing" into him with sting, tooth, and claw. There was also a barnlike stable, where, for a further extortionate sum, the unwary traveller could have the privilege of cleaning his own nag, giving him a feed of mouldy oats, and bedding

him down on something purporting to be straw.

If the male element frequenting Schmidl's was not very "toney," the female element was shockingly below *par*. Quentin was by no means a congested district; men were not numerous, respectable women few, and disreputable women almost *nil*, as a permanent part of the community. But even small, sequestered Quentin was not all Arcadian innocence. Wherever money is to be made, however distant and secluded the spot, hither hand-in-hand Avarice and Speculation come stalking, and trailing after them comes bold-faced, slipshod, romping Lais, ready and eager for her share of the plunder. Even in lonely Quentin, so far removed from the world's high-roads, there were characters sailing under dubious colours, and not above the breath of reproach. A queer fish himself, Schmidl had the faculty of drawing to him all other queer fish swim-

ming in his vicinity, and by their aid contrived to make "a lively shop" of the North Star.

Could Mrs. Lansdell but have seen her son—that son of many prayers and many tears—among a limited but glorious and uproarious audience, vociferously applauding a *pas-de-trois* by three colonial ladies, locally known as the three Dis-graces, her virtuous British cheek would have flamed, her cold British eye have darted sparks at "those hussies," and she would have felt inclined to tell Wrayburn he ought to be ashamed of himself, to be taking his ease at home while the boy committed to his care was going to destruction.

McFarlane, always on the alert whenever destruction was in the air, swooped down upon Wrayburn, and exhorted him to pluck this brand from the burning.

"How am I to do it?" the exhortee asked mildly.

“Do’t?” echoed McFarlane, his thin lips quivering with scorn and energy. “Ye’re auskin’ how’ll ye do’t? Daunt trouble yeresel’ wi’ ony hauf measures. Jest grip him be th’ scuff o’ th’ neck, mon—be th’ scuff o’ th’ neck.” And he shook his clenched hands to illustrate the action.

“If the place of burning were as literal as one would suppose from your advice,” said Wrayburn, “I might snatch this brand as I would a terrier. But if you’ll show me in what part of Jack’s moral conformation the scuff of the neck lies, I’ll be thankful for the information, as I’m not likely to discover it myself.”

For a moment McFarlane glared upon him, speechless.

“God forgive ye, Mr. Wrayburn,” he said, with bitter contempt. “Ye’re shaurly naw better than a deevil yeresel or ye’d no’ do as ye’re doin’.” And turning on his heel he abruptly left the house, more scandalized than ever.

The south wind was blowing and the first thaw had set in ; the whole land was dripping, the glaciers were cracking, the torrents foaming, the ice sliding ; that farming time, so much dreaded by Jack, was returning, and yet McFarlane was not in good spirits, as he usually was at this time of the year.

“Alexaunder, what makes ye saw dowie th’ nicht ?” his wife asked him one Sunday evening when they were sitting together, after the youngsters were all in bed.

McFarlane, who was staring at the closed Bible on the table before him, roused himself, and sighed heavily.

“Aum thinkin’ o’ th’ condeetion o’ this settlement,” he said, in a gloomy voice.

“Pity me ! Caunna ye leave thinkin’ o’ th’ settlement for four an’ twenty hours ?” exclaimed his wife. “Ye should na be lettin’ ye’re min’ run on temporalities on the Sawbath.”

“It’s no’ temporalities, but th’ awfu’

spirityul condeetion o' this place that distairbs ma min'," said he.

"Folks a' seem pretty peaceable th' noo," she observed indifferently.

"*Seem.* Oh ay; but it's no' seemin' we've got to deal wi', Jessie woman, but facts; an' Aw tell ye these puir sauls roundabout's in a maust awfu' state. It's the natyure o' man to git saw used to things, hooever bad they be, it's aunly whiles an' again he'll wauken up to see th' facts. To-day Aw've had a waukenin', an' Aum jest stunnered be it."

"Aw tho't Aw never h'ard Mr. Morgan lead th' exercises wi' maur evidences o' grace than to-day," Mrs. McFarlane said. "He was fairly carried awa' wi' airnestness, and just wrastled in prayer."

"Ye may weel say 'carried awa'," said McFarlane, in a contemptuous tone. "He was here awa' an' there awa'; prayin' fur things all ower th' warld; an' aunly a worrd at th' laust fur them here that needs wrastlin'

for maur than th' outermost heathen. Hoo many were there at worship, Jessie?"

She considered for a moment, and, counting on her fingers, said slowly, "There were oorsel's, an' th' Morgans, an'——"

"Aw think ye'll be hard set to count ony maur," he interrupted. "An' it's been like that fur mony a Sawbath bauck."

"Yet there seemed a great outpourin' when Mr. Collins was here," Mrs. McFarlane said regretfully.

"There y'are again wi' your 'seemed,'" he cried impatiently. "They're a' gaun bauck to th' beggarly elements. Penrhyn drinks as bad's ever, an' his wife complains o' weakness, an' caunna get herself or her children dressed in time fur sairvice. Brennan's marrit a wife, an' Duffy's got a yoke o' oxen, so *they* caunna come. Fanshawe's saw chokit up wi' th' cares o' this life, an' th' deceitfulness o' a saw-mill, that he's clean daft wi' pride an' stubbornness, an' *winna*

caum. An' his wife—foolish body!—takes up a' his quarrels, an' winna caum either."

"Their twa lassies were there th' day," his wife interposed.

"Ay, were they; an' trickit oot in new gairments wi' gaudy ribbons, like young circus hizzies maur than Christ'en childern," he replied severely. "There's that unfort'nit creatyure, Eugene Bord, calls himsel' a papish, Aw suppaase, an' his feckless gowk o' a wife too. But, whatever th' are, they've haud naw chaunce o' booin' down to their idols in a' these years, so far's Aw know. They're wi'oot God or hope i' th' warld, an' are worse than ony heathen; fur a Chineese has saum idolatry that staunds to him fur worship, but these are like th' beasts that perish. There's that misguidit Wrayburn, livin' as ever, wi' naw fear o' God or deevil; an' teachin' that idle cuttie o' his'n to set as light be releegion as himsel'. Woman dear, Aw tell ye thaw this place lukes saw fair on

th' outside, it's naw better than a vaira Gomorrah. There's naw grace or repentance among them."

Mrs. McFarlane sighed as these depressing "facts" were brought under her notice.

"Ay, endeed, it lukes as if a gude few o' them's fallen fraum grace," she said, with a melancholy shake of her head, "for there was saum vaira encouragin' testimony when Mr. Collins ~~was~~ here, gude mon that he was!"

"Plenty o' talk an' testimony, but naw effectyul callin'," answered the remorseless sifter of morals. "Mr. Collins haud his gifts, Awl no deny't; but ye all made too much o' his gift o' th' gab, an' cockit him up wi' th' nawtion he was all an' ivery one. An' that's no' becomin' in a youth, an' made him too ready to teach his elders."

"Aw aye tho't him a vaira mild an' modest young mon."

"Mild enough, but naw saw modest,"

said McFarlane, who never cherished a partiality for those who in any way obscured his own gifts, and was therefore inclined to disparage rather than regret the "pillar of grace." "Aunly a mon, aunly a mon, efter all; an' th' gospel 'll hauve to be preached in pairts o' th' warld where Mr. Collins caunna be always at haund to do th' preachin'."

"There's naun here can do't like him," Mrs. McFarlane said, with an air of sorrowful conviction.

"Hoo'd ye knaw thaut," he demanded, "when nawbody's tried? Thaut was waun o' th' rideec'lus rules made at th' beginnin' fur peace' sake. An' Auve often been ashamed since to think hoo unfaithful Aw was to give in saw readily to th' shuttin' out o' th' preached worrd. How'm Aw to give an account o' ma stewardship wi' yon reprauch starin' me in th' face an' yet unremoved?"

"Aw daunt knaw that ye've ony call to think o' yersel' as a steward maur than th'

authors, for ye're no' an ordained minister," said his wife, consolingly, "so ye're no maur unfaithful."

This view of the case was particularly offensive to McFarlane, who was enjoying himself immensely to-night with thoughts of making up for past neglected opportunities by a more vigorous oversight of spiritualities in future.

"Ye're nought büt a fule!" he said roughly. "Ma aun conveections, an' airly trainin', an' poseetion here all entitle me to th' natyrul oversight o' these wasterals, whether they like't or no'. An', if Aw could aunly gar them waunce listen, Aw tell ye it's no' th' melodyus turrs an' twists o' Collins they'd hear. It's no' butterin' up wi' saft words, an' leadin' be still watters they'd get fraum me, Aw warrant ye. Aw'd gie them their pay—puir, daft, fushionless creatyurs that th' are."

"It's no' easy breakin' auld rules; an' it's

ill wark preachin' th' gospel o' peace efter stairrin' up a' th' strife ye caun," said the cautious wife.

"Ye should min' it's no' always peace, but sometimes a s'ord," he replied. "An' Aw'm no maur feared to hear ma witness to th' truth in th' face o' sneers an' jibes than ma forefathers waur. An' it'll jest wark, an' wark, an' wark in me till ever Aw let them haue it."

Whether it was the desire to acquaint his neighbours with the gospel of peace, or with the full extent of his own bad opinion of them, that acted like fermentation on McFarlane's inner consciousness, it would be hard to say. But his wife knew well that his militant spirit once raised would not be laid again until he had given them "their pay" sure enough. So she contented herself with muttering a hope that things might be done "to edification."

For several days after this McFarlane was

unusually quiet, saying little to any one, unless when he had to administer a rebuke to his saucy pupil. McFarlane always rebuked with a plainness of speech and disregard of feeling sufficient to make even the proverbial worm turn, and which exasperated Jack's haughty spirit beyond all bounds.

"Mr. Wrayburn," McFarlane said, meeting Wrayburn by chance in the main street of Quentin, and buttonholing him, "d'ye mind th' entertainment ye were fur givin' in th' schoolhouse?"

"Yes," said Wrayburn.

For, finding how greatly his own life was marred by his own private animosity, he was nervously anxious to heal all the feuds he came across. To restore the old neighbourly kindness and unity, he had proposed to give a supper-party soon after his return, to bring the people into good-humour again. But as public feeling was much divided at the time, and some of the Swanneckers were not on

speaking terms with the rest, his proposal had been met very coldly. Nothing had come of it, although since then a somewhat better state of things had come about.

“There was to be a supper, an’ music, an’ dauncin’, and sechlike,” said McFarlane.

“Yes,” said Wrayburn again, a little mystified.

“Weel, ye caun give yere supper, if so be ye’re willin’. Aw make naw further objections, providin’ ye leave th’ rest o’ th’ entertainin’ to maself.”

“What! are you coming out as a society man?”

“Not likely,” McFarlane replied, with a dry smile and astute nod of the head sideways. “But ye said it was fur th’ benefit o’ Swanneck, an’ Aw’ve ma aun nawtions o’ benefitin’ it too. So, if ye’re willin’ to make it a joint-stock affair, say th’ worrd an’ git yere stuff ready.”

“But what is the amusement to be?”

"Ay, ye'll knaw thaut too, all in gude time, but no' at present. Aunly there'll be music; an' Aw want ye to promise ye'll do th' playin', fur there's naun else to do't."

"It's a tea-meeting you mean to have, I suppose?" said Wrayburn.

"Ye may call it so, if ye like. Folks nowadays make sech a god o' their bellies ye'll no' git 'em to caum far wi'oot ye hauld out saum enducement in th' way o' victuals. But it's maur a prayer-meetin' Aw waunt to haue, wi' singin' an' evaungelistic addresses."

"A revival meeting, in fact?"

"Thaut's as it may be, an' as th' Lorrd gives th' drawin's o' grace. But whether or no Aw suppaase ye'll agree that a revival's badly needin' amang th' sauls here, fur they're jest lyin' in th' corruption o' complete spirityul deadness."

"I've never been mixed up with things of this kind," Wrayburn said, after a moment's pause.

“Aw knaw weel ye’ve not,” McFarlane replied, with great significance in the severity of look and tone accompanying his words. “But ye offered to give a supper, an’ it was declined; an’ now, when ye’re awskit to give a tea instead, ye hauld bauck, because instead o’ revellin’s an’ junkettin’ there’s a chaunce o’ brengin’ sinners to repentance. Mon, mon, hauce ye given up every gude wark?”

“I’m not sure that this *is* a good work,” the other returned lightly, “though it’s a thrifty idea to revive the colours of religion in people by sprinkling them with tea first, before stirring up the dust of their sins.”

“Ye’re th’ maust haupless trifier Aw’ve ever met,” McFarlane said, with mournful solemnity. “Aw was on ma knees before daylight this mornin’ prayin’ fur th’ sinners aroun’ me, an’——”

“Thanking God you’re not as other men are,” Wrayburn put in cheerfully.

“Yere tongue is jest a weapon o’ yere

master th' deevil," McFarlane said, with a flash of anger. "But Aw've naw time to staund here fendin' an' provin' wi' ye. Aw suppaase ye're willin' to provide th' tea anyways; an' shall Aw see about th' arrangements, or wull ye do't yeresel'?"

Wrayburn's eyes were laughing, though he was quite grave otherwise. The canny way in which McFarlane was making a tool of him to enhance the *éclat* of his own meeting without any expense to himself was very diverting to him.

"Isn't it asking a good deal," he said, "to expect me to provide the refreshments and music, and yet to content myself with a back seat, and take my share of the godly pummellings that are sure to be included in the sports? Besides, you are entirely altering the character of the supper-party as originally intended, and are asking me not only to renounce the dignity of playing host, but to make an exhibition of my own incon-

sistency by contributing to the very form of hospitality with which I have least sympathy."

"Ye're always vaira good-natured, Mr. Wrayburn, Au'll say thaut fur ye," McFarlane said, with a soothed and placable manner; "an if ye've naw seempathy with a gude thing, it aunly shaws th' greater need fur a change o' hairt in yeresel' as well's in authers; so th' suner th' meetin's held th' better it'll be fur all."

Wrayburn laughed aloud at the adroit way in which McFarlane turned the situation to his own advantage.

"Well," said he, "I'll tell Eugene to put his ovens in order and set to work. How many shall I cater for?"

"As many's the schulehouse'll hauld."

"Oh, nonsense! the schoolhouse wouldn't accommodate a hundred. The nights are fine now, and you can put tables outside under the trees. Your draw-nets will surely fish up more than a hundred."

“Aw’d like to do what’s fair an’ honest be ye,” McFarlane said slowly, with a reflective air. “Whaun ye purposed givin’ yon supper it was to th’ inhabitants o’ th’ settlement aunly, no’ to th’ gener’l public; an’ Aum willin’ to show saum conseederation fur ye,” he added with a smile, “an’ no’ to rifle yere pockets be bringin’ ye into a snare.”

“But isn’t it desirable that as many as possible should be preached to, while you have the chance?” Wrayburn asked innocently.

“It is, shaur enough; but it’s no’ desirable ye should be auskit to feed a mixed multitude o’ rauscals fraum here an’ Auburn; fur Aw’ll canvass th’ whaule district.”

“But I understood you to say that unless they were sustained by a little bodily food of an appetizing nature first, their souls might reject the heavenly food offered later on.”

McFarlane looked vexed and perplexed.

“Aw wish ye’d drop that freevolous manner o’ yourn,” he said irritably, drawing his bushy brows together in a frown. “They’d see fur themselves when they cem thaut th’ schulehouse wouldn’t hold maur’n feefty fur a meal; so whoever cem fairst had th’ best rights to sit down. Of coorse,” he added, “whatever was left over could be haundit round to them thaut came too late fur a seat—as far’s it’d go.”

The dauntless manner in which McFarlane proposed to combine the private justice of a strict economy with the public benefit of a large meeting by exalting the merits of punctuality was too much for Wrayburn.

“By Jove! you’re a loss to the diplomatic body,” he began, when McFarlane called him to order with business-like promptitude.

“We’ll say this day week, eh?” said Mac.

“Whenever you like. But, Mr. McFarlane, you must let me off the music. I really

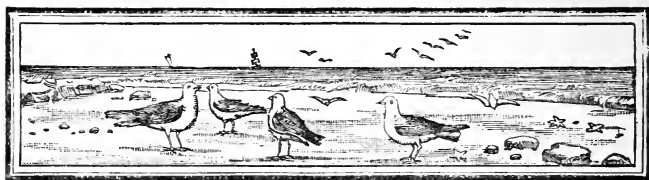
cannot undertake to be a performer in these pious theatricals."

"Daunt call things be wrong names. There's nauthin' o' th' the'tre in bringin' sauls out o' dairkness into light."

"There is when the whole is an attempt to work upon the most easily excited emotions."

"Aw daunt incline t'wards things o' an emawtional natyure maself, as a rule; but ye maun wark upon saumthin' in th' case o' dead dowgs like these, an' it'll no' hairt them to set their emawtions on th' alairt to give 'em a hoist out o' th' pit o' destruction."

The philosophical and even contumelious manner in which McFarlane spoke of the neighbours whom he so desired to benefit was not the least amusing part of his conversation to Wrayburn.



CHAPTER VI.

AT length the eventful night arrived, the night on which McFarlane was to effect a forcible revival of religion in Swan-neck. He had scoured the whole neighbourhood to bring in sinners, and, judging by the numbers who came, repentance was to be the order of the day. Among the womenkind there had been a most enjoyable fuss of preparation beforehand—the tables were spread with a bountiful supply of good things, and every one felt in excellent spirits.

McFarlane was obliged to fall back on Morgan to lead the singing, when Wrayburn

refused to have anything to do with it, and this annoyed him. Morgan could start a hymn; and if he had not much voice, he had a wonderful gift of prayer, and some experience in love-feasts and revival-meetings. He responded so readily to McFarlane's invitation to help him, that the latter felt a jealous anxiety lest the lieutenant, unless he was well "sat upon," should prove more competent than the general. On this account he had been eager to secure some one who could play the harmonium, that Morgan might be kept humbly in the shade and in no wise allowed to detract from his own light.

On this night McFarlane was resolved to make one grand effort to regain the ascendancy he had formerly held in Swan-neck. The elements were mixed with which he had to deal; but that did not daunt him, for they were all alike in being sinners. Morgan, poor man, as a simple creature,

might have some Methodistical inkling of the great truths of religion. But the rest, without exception, were in the pit of gall, and that gave him confidence. Strictly speaking, there was but one righteous man in Swanneck ; but one who had the courage to bring them together to tell them how their evil lives had vexed his righteous soul.

Some heavy eating was done before the religious exercises began. The mountain sheep and venison which Wrayburn had brought in were much appreciated. Though McFarlane would fain have shortened these gastronomic pleasures, since he could not dispense with them, the carnally minded lingered lovingly over their fleshpots, and seemed in no great hurry to be "awakened." It irritated him in his zealous humour to see them, when they could eat no more, leaning forward with their elbows on the table leisurely picking their teeth and digesting their food.

He would wait no longer. While the younger members of the company were yet wiping their sticky fingers on their ribs, or removing the stickiness more effectually by putting them through a cleansing process in the mouth, he took his place at the end of the room, upon the little platform that was raised a couple of feet above the level.

"While th' room's bein' cleared, thause that's not engaged in helpin' wull please caum to th' plotform an' we'll hauve a hymn," he said, with quite the correct "evaungelistic" manner.

Six or eight of those who had eaten most heartily, and were therefore least disposed to help in clearing decks for action, came forward with cheerful readiness and took the books he handed to them. McFarlane had looked up all the hymns he could find bearing on the judgment and destruction of sinners. He gave out one of these now, after a whispered consultation with Morgan, who

struck up with the full power of his lungs—

“Hearken to the solemn voice,
The awful midnight cry!
Waiting souls, rejoice, rejoice,
And see the Bridegroom nigh.”

Morgan, who had a thin falsetto voice, and could work his way through any hymn that ever was written, started this to the tune *Preparation*. By inflexible determination he was able to reach the high G. But as no one else could follow his courageous flight, after a little bungling he was obliged to change to the more familiar *Madrid*, and begin over again. By the time it was ended the room was cleared, all seats were filled, and those for whom there were no seats, ranged round the walls and doorway. The room was packed to overflowing, and McFarlane's eyes glistened. It was not, however, altogether magnanimity that made him say, “Perhaps Mr. Morgan will now

engage in prayer." Morgan was in his element; he could have prayed and sung hymns all night. Knowing this, McFarlane deemed it expedient to let him get all his steam, so to speak, blown off at once, and leave a clear stage for himself.

He never was as grateful as he should have been to Mrs. Morgan, who in reality struck the key-note of revivalism. She had not forgotten all her early experiences. Although she had been as busy as a bee and as lively as a cricket only a few minutes before, as soon as her husband began to pray she produced a clean white handkerchief, shook out its folds, and fell a-sobbing into it with apparent sincerity. Encouraged by this sound, Morgan waxed more and more earnest, rocking to and fro, like one in agony, grinding his feet upon the floor, and clawing the air. There were other Methodists in the room besides the Penrhyns and Morgans, and a pleasing chain of associa-

tion linked them together. Some one said "Amen," and gave a distinct groan. Soon there was a dropping fire of groans and "Amens," and a determined grinding upon the floor, as if they had got Satan finally beaten down under their feet and were stamping out the last sparks.

"Amen! come, Lord, come now!" groaned a man from Quentin, who was supposed to have been down on his luck for some time past, and might therefore feel resigned to see the consummation of all things.

"Hallelujah! yes, Lord, come!" cried a woman, gazing upwards and holding out her hands. Shuffling upon the floor increased tenfold, and sobbing became infectious.

"Mother," whispered Agnes McFarlane, who looked frightened, "I'd like to get out of this. I feel sick."

"Aw knew weel," returned the mother, also in a whisper, "whaun Aw saw ye eatin' thaut clatty puddin' o' Mrs. Brennan's ye'd

mauk yeresel' sick. Aw tauld ye befaur to beware o' her sticky messes. Sit still, an' give heed to ye're fauther, an' it'll go off ye."

Not looking much reassured, Agnes sat still, and prepared to give heed as desired; for Morgan had at length reluctantly concluded his prayer, and a calmer star rose on the horizon.

"Escape fur tha life, luke not behint ye," McFarlane said in a loud voice, and, fixing his eye steadily on the occupants of the front benches, paused, as if giving them time to consider the readiest mode of escape.

"Ma frien's," he said, bringing his words out one by one, as he always did when he wished to be impressive, "we're livin' in th' laust dispensation, an' th' signs o' th' times shaw plainly that it's nearin' its end. Th' end o' the world's nigh at haund. Ye canna escape it whichiver way ye wull, fur death's th' end so far's we're consairned at ony time.

It's boun' to caum, an' ye daunt knaw how sune—maybe this vaira night. Luke aroun' fur yersel's, an' take a view o' th' warld fur yersel's, an' read thause signs. We're tauld thaut knowledge shall encrease. What's these here electric lights, an' telegraups, an' telephaunes, an' phonograups, an' sechlike thaut we hear tell of, thaw we daun't jest see them, but th' encrease o' knowledge? We're tauld men shall rin to an' fro in th' airth; and aren't they doin' thaut same? travellin' here, explaurin' there, pawkin' their noses up mountains an' into deserts; turrnin' th' whaule roun' warld into waun big line o' railway, an' tunnellin' under't, an' thrue it, saw thaut it'll reel to an' fro sune, like a drunken man, accordin' to the prophecy. An' thrue bein' brought saw cheek be jowl wi' outlandish peoples, there's naw doot but in time we'll haue th' plagues thaut are promised too in th' laust times.

“Whaun Aw was a boy aunly gentlefolks

tho't o' takin' holidays; an' if a boy was unruly his elders laid on him weel wi' a thong. But now there's actyully soci'ties for regulatin', as ye may say, hoo much or hoo little ye caun lay on. An' what's th' consequence?" Here McFarlane paused, and fixed his severe eye so steadily on some one at the side of the room, that all who turned round saw it was Jack Lansdell, who was pointing the moral of McFarlane's tale.

"There's a heady, high mind, an' a prood stomach, thaut sets up it's bauck against all authority," he went on slowly, "an' against all lawful worrk; that's saw idle, an' saw cursedly impident thaut aunly th' grace o' God at times caun keep ye fraum breakin' its head, an' thaut's a sin an' a scaundal a decent mon is auskit to put up wi' an' git naw redress. Disabejent to elders, an' lovers o' pleasure maur'n lovers o' God. There ye've anauther sign o' th' times we're livin' in."

There was a rustle of approval at this point of McFarlane's exordium. Public interest was whetted by finding his remarks upon the general doom were to be seasoned by personal proofs and examples. If he made the caps, they would find heads to fit them.

"Escape fur tha life, luke not behint ye," he began afresh. "Daun't ye be makin' ony pictyur o' th' cities o' th' plain. Yon's jest a pictyur o' th' warld, an' suits ony time an' place. Th' fire an' brimstone's fur *you*, an's jest about to fall upaun ye. Th' anger o' God caun naw longer wait. Yere sins are cryin' out against ye. Ye've sat in th' bars o' Quentin, drenchin' yeresel's wi' th' vilest rubbish, whaun ye might ha' been pushin' into th' kingdom o' God. Yere money's been gaun to keep up a godless auld vagabone thaut's naw haup in this warld, and vaira little, Aw'm thinkin', fur th' next."

Here all eyes were turned upon Schmidl,

who smiled affably and laid his hand upon his heart.

“Caum up here, S’midl, like a mon, an’ confess ye’re sins, ye auld limmer, an’ caust away yere filthiness,” McFarlane cried imperatively.

Schmidl bowed again, and was understood to say that, while his modesty forbade him accepting the invitation, he would suggest that Mr. Penrhyn, who owed him a long score, disputed four-fifths of it, and had threatened him with assault and battery over it, might very suitably obey the injunction. Some reprobates near the door laughed, but there was an augmented grinding of feet in front, and Mrs. Penrhyn was taken with a desperate fit of groaning.

“Ye’re among the goats, Enoch, ye know you are!” she moaned, apostrophizing her husband. “Go up and confess your sins, and maybe you’ll get grace. Anyways, do have one more try to get yourself among

the sheep. *Do!* If you don't, I'll give up, for my heart's just broke with you."

"Ay, do, brother, do. The Lord's yet waiting," said a deeply interested neighbour on his right.

"Now's the day of salvation," urged the neighbour on his left, nudging him energetically.

"Praise the Lord, there'll be a soul saved here presently!" cried another from behind.

Enoch rose to his feet. "Let me out of this! Where's my hat?" he exclaimed, looking round, and abashed by the crowd of eyes all turned upon him.

"Escape fur tha life!" bawled McFarlane, encouragingly, though he regarded Penrhyn as very small fry. "Caum away, Enoch, caum away, an' daun't be feared fur mockers. Remember th' fire an' brimstone thaut's re-sairved fur ye."

When Penrhyn stood up, and began to work his way along the crowded row in

which he was wedged, he hardly knew whether his intention was to leave the room or to go up to the front. But as he passed through a great many hands all endeavouring to forward him to the platform, finally he found himself there.

“Mr. McFarlane,” he said in a low voice, and with a humility that sat almost pathetically on such a big, handsome fellow, “I know I’m not in the kingdom, and if you or any other man can get me there, I’m willing for ye to try. But it’s my own belief that even the grace o’ God can’t make much of a drunkard. If the whole universe was one sea of brimstone, if there was twenty hells, and I’d a separate soul to burn for ever in each of ’em, once my fingers had closed on a glass, I should drink my damnation all the same. It’s stronger than me.”

“Ye puir lost soul——!” McFarlane began, when Penrhyn interrupted him.

“I’m a lost soul, I know; so do what ye

can for others who may have a chance yet, and never mind me."

Here a gentleman with a conspicuously red nose, and very bibulous aspect altogether, found there had been death in the pot for him as well as for Agnes McFarlane, for at this juncture he evinced a strong desire to relieve the room of his company. But he was ignominiously brought back and pushed up to keep Penrhyn in countenance at the "penitent bench." Two or three other gentlemen, whose moral walk was not characterized by such a beautiful rectitude as might be desired, being pressed by the importunities of their spouses, and overcome by Mac's arguments, were also prevailed upon to go up and have their moral impurities deodorized. One of these gentlemen wore a heavy pilot-cloth coat that appeared to contain about as much dust as an average shop door-mat. As McFarlane prayed over this bowed penitent he patted

him upon the shoulder to show encouragement. As the praying became more zealous the patting became more vigorous, until a cloud as of incense ascended from the pilot-cloth individual. Some natural tears those in his immediate vicinity shed, and their groaning was much interrupted by coughing; but McFarlane drubbed on, intent only on saving his man from the sulphurous destiny that threatened him.

As Penrhyn was returning to his place beside his weeping wife, he looked up and straightened himself.

"You don't need to look down upon me so *very* much either," he said dryly, "for if the drunkard can't go into the kingdom, no more can the covetous. Only it ain't so easy to point 'em out; they're generally respectable — very respectable indeed are covetous people."

"Ye've spauken' a true worrd, Enoch Penrhyn," said McFarlane, emphatically.

“The covetyus mon’s th’ enemy o’ his neighbours an’ th’ whaule race. There’s a covetyus mon—Aw daunt knaw whether he’s in this room, anyways he’s in this settle-ment—that’s saun th’ seeds o’ dissension whaure there was peace; thaut, fur greed an’ gain, has driven out honest worrkers an’ bro’t a pack o’ hungry heathen into th’ place, to give us an’ our fam’lies their nausty diseases. For, Aw wull say, Aw’ve never seen a maur unwhaulsome set o’ people——”

“Here, here! Right you are, Mac!” cried a voice from the background. “Give it ’em—the measly varmint!”

“Mr. McFarlane,” exclaimed a loud, indignant voice, “you don’t know whether I’m here or not? Well, I *am* here. I’m listening to you. I know very well who you mean, and what you mean. I’m a covetous man, am I? My men are unwholesome, are they? Very good! Will they be mended, d’ye think, by the carcasses of dis-

eased pigs and cattle that you trade to 'em and argle-bargle over, when you get the chance? Is it for gain or for charity you tote off your year's losses this handy way? Don't stand there, you hypocritical old humbug, preachin' at me," vociferated Fanshawe, "when there isn't a man within fifty miles can cheat as cleverly as yourself. You needn't think you'll bring me to my knees and make a fool of me before every one. I'm no lump of putty. You let me manage my own business, and don't be interfering. You've started this here meeting to stir up public feeling against me under the cloak of religion. But I don't care *that* for you or any other man in the room."

He snapped his fingers defiantly, glared around in an alarming manner, and pushed his way out, very red in the face, and swearing audibly.

There was a moment's pause, and then a strife of tongues. The unregenerate were

for following the employer of Chinese labour, demolishing his saw-mill, stoning and scattering his "heathen." After a brief period of wild confusion, moderate counsels prevailed. Some of those who were inclined for "a lark" relieved the divided assembly of their unprofitable presence, and the revivalistic exercises recommenced.

Fanshawe's vigorous onslaught had greatly ruffled McFarlane's dignity. It was more than ever incumbent upon him, he felt, to assert himself. But it was not well to analyze the injurious statements too deeply, or keep public attention drawn to them any longer than was necessary. McFarlane is not the only man in the world perfectly honest and trustworthy in the matter of paying just debts and fulfilling lawful engagements, but who, when a chance of gain offers, cannot resist turning the nimble penny. He was able to settle it with his own conscience; and surely what was good enough

for him was good enough for these worldlings. Therefore he held his ground sturdily, and took up his parable, more determined than ever to let them have "their pay."

"Ma frien's," he said, with a wave of his hand, "yon ill-tongued baukslider, who boasts that nawthin' 'll bring him to his knees, is of the same old breed as Hymenæus and Alexander that Paul delivered over unto Satan, that they might lairn not to blaspheme. He's made shipwreck o' his aun faith an'd fain see us all in th' same baut wi' himsel'. But, thank th' Lorrd, our hairts are fixed whaur true joys 're to be foun', an' no' in a paltry saw-mill."

Having disposed of the unrepentant Fanshawe by this implied excommunication very much to his own and every one else's satisfaction, he set about weaving together the threads of his interrupted discourse. Arming himself with all the fiercest denunciations of the minor prophets, he stormed the citadels

of local sin, hurled down their various Dianas, ramped up and down through their easy-going self-complacency, thrashed their vanity with briars, forced them to have at least a glimpse of themselves as others saw them, threatened and thundered at them, almost cursed them for their deadness and contumacy, spiked every little gun they might have in reserve for their own defence, exploded every little refuge of lies wherein they trusted. When at last he sat down he was hoarse and perspiring. It was an edifying spectacle of what man will do for his fellow-man to establish his own pre-eminence. McFarlane had made a hard fight for it, and was flushed with victory.

The meeting broke up in perfect good-humour, but with less liveliness and sociability than at its commencement. Each man had such a full cargo of sins to tow home that his whole attention was required for his own

craft, and he had no time to bestow upon others.

"It's beenh a grandt evening," Morgan said to his chief.

"Ay," the chief answered, heaving a sigh of satisfaction.

"But I'd a liket to haveh seenh more brought underh conviction of sinh. Therh was a kindt of damp kem overh their enthusyism."

"It's jest as weel to keep't damped too," McFarlane said stolidly. "Aw've vaira little opeenion o' froth an' rant. There's a cheap-rated enthuse'ism that leads men to per-deetion; it's aunly from th' teeth out an' no' fraum th' hairt; they're enthuseastic over onythin' or nothin'. These gommerils caunna but say they've h'ard th' truth to-night, an' let 'em put it in their pipe an' smoke it."

"Still, ye wor a little hardt on themh, were ye not?" Morgan asked meekly, with an apologetic smile. "Anys one to hearh

ye wouldt think ye'd beenh right downh into hell, and measuredt it out for themh yourself."

"Eh, mon," McFarlane answered sternly, "ye caunna do ought wi' sech tough ungodliness as is in these here unless ye hauld them right in th' heat o' hell fire."





CHAPTER VII.

FOR two or three weeks after the famous revival meeting people in Swanneck were exceeding pious. During the first week a prayer-meeting was held every evening in the schoolhouse. In the second week it was held only twice. In the third week they were content with the ordinary Sunday service. But all came to it. Even Fanshawe, whose anger was soon over, put in an appearance, rightly judging it was well to be on as good terms as possible with those who had for their allies stone-throwers and mill-burners. All was brotherly love and devotion. But it was hard for human nature to

keep up to such high-pitched spirituality for any length of time. Before a month was over the double-minded were falling back into what McFarlane forcibly called their "thraward ways an' wallyin's in th' mire."

Schmidl's trade revived after a temporary depression. Jack ceased to fear that the end of the world would come during the night, and that he should wake to find himself "midst flaming worlds." McFarlane had occasion to lecture Wrayburn more vehemently than ever on his dereliction of duty with respect to the boy. As Wrayburn had quietly remained at home on the night of the meeting, his accuser saw fit to add that he was "a child of wrath, and would go to perdition."

Though he laughed, Wrayburn was greatly annoyed, more annoyed with himself than with any one else. It needed not the sapience of a McFarlane to show that Jack's conduct was unsatisfactory, but some brilliant

intuition was necessary to show how the unsatisfactoriness could be altered.

The North Star revelries were not what troubled him, or gave him hours of perplexing thought. Whenever he chose he could put a stop to Jack's participation in all such revelries. Yet this was the very thing he knew he would not do. Nay, he had surreptitiously paid Eugene Bord's little bill for the cigars, wine, and brandy Jack had lavished upon the Swanneckers in the first exuberance of his patronizing liberality. Jack had been a little uneasy about that bill; the secret payment formed a precedent, and from it he gained much insight into the character of the man with whom he had to do. From the moment he found he had nothing to fear from Wrayburn he ceased to respect him.

Modest, honourable, and transparent himself, Wrayburn naturally considered Jack's want of manly impulse and upright feeling

was of much graver importance than his North Star predilections, which were only of the passing idle moment. He attributed all Jack's misconduct to his own bad handling ; but how to repair mistakes, or how to make a fresh start, baffled his understanding. Whenever he inclined towards severity his Eumenides appeared to him, not with snakes and torches, but with the face of a dead man—his own friend and Jack's father. Over-reverence for the helplessness of the silent dead made him over-gentle with the stubborn living.

It might be as well, however, to forbid Jack's further attendance at Schmidl's, though he felt it was rather unfair to interdict an amusement without providing a substitute. But hitherto he had been very unsuccessful in all proposals for Jack's entertainment, so had let things go with the tide. Only that afternoon, in looking for something in a table-drawer, he had come across the photo-

graph of a strangely attired damsel, all neck, smiles, and *ankles*. It had evidently been thrust in hastily out of sight, for the drawer was not one specially belonging to Jack. Wrayburn had no knowledge of this girl, and believed no ill of her so far as Jack was concerned, but she was decidedly an additional reason for objecting to Schmidl's.

Had he been skilful he would have led up gradually to the final prohibition, suggesting the lowered tone likely to ensue from association with vulgar and disreputable people, the tentative nature of Jack's residence in Swanneck, and the necessity of returning home with an unblemished record. Instead of this, at the last moment, as Jack was just leaving the house, he said to him abruptly—

“Mind, Jack, you're not to go to Schmidl's. I forbid you to go there any more.”

Jack fired up instantly. “Forbid me?” he retorted, in a tone of marked insolence.

“ I should like to know how you can prevent me, if I choose to go.”

Now, Wrayburn was by no means clear what his own line of action might be if his authority was openly defied, so he contented himself with saying—

“ You’re not to go, that’s all.”

“ So you say ; but I promised I’d be there this evening, and I *will* be there—that’s all,” Jack replied, as he went out.

“ Is this a case for reading the Riot Act, or is it a case for masterly inactivity ? Evidently I’ve got hold of a son of Zeruiah,” Wrayburn said to himself, with a keen sense of the ridiculous.

Jack was not clever, but, when he chose to show it, there was observable in him that practical kind of competence which distinguishes the English upper classes rather than any widely diffused intellectuality. Had he been born with a silver spoon in his mouth, and been absorbed into his

father's rather than his mother's family, the radical defects of his character would have been not only less evident, but of less consequence. It takes much sterner stuff, much higher qualities altogether, to make a virtuous poor man than a virtuous rich one, and in dealing with the poor this should be recognized, though it very seldom is. Jack would make an admirable country gentleman, an active and moderately generous landlord, a just, if somewhat severe, magistrate, with a firm belief in the law as touching others; a keen sportsman and diligent improver of the breed of horses, which in itself rates higher than a virtuous life with a discriminating British public; as a legislator, wearing the pallium of political humbug with all the dignity of an inborn faith in its propriety.

Observing with critical eyes the nascent possibilities of Jack's budding manhood, Wrayburn had come to doubt the wisdom

of his own guidance. He often thought the wisest and kindest thing he could do for him would be to introduce him to his father's family, and enlist on his behalf their interest and sympathy. Finding him ready reared, handsome, well-mannered and creditable, they might be induced to admit him to their select circle, and give him a leg up to some snug place where he would be not only secured from the too-rude buffetings of a vulgar world, but could assist in the regulation of that world. The chief hindrance to making this adventure was the doubt in Wrayburn's own mind, whether it would not be washing his hands of a troublesome responsibility and assisting in that side-door jugglery by which unsuitable men are hoisted into public places. One thing had become clear: as this farming experiment had been a failure, Jack would have to change his ground, and begin over again from some very different starting-point.

After pondering for more than an hour, and coming to something very like a decision on this matter, Wrayburn rose and resolved to bring Jack home from Quentin.

In a few minutes he had lit a lantern and got his canoe ready. Fixing the light at the bow, he was soon skimming swiftly over the lake. Following its long, sweeping curve, Swanneck was soon out of sight. The night was fine and starlight, cold but exhilarating; and he felt a comfortable rising and expansion of his spirits at getting away from his worrying problem.

As he went smoothly he began to hum snatches of songs, and then to sing them; finally, letting the canoe float with the gentle current, he poured forth the full volume of his splendid voice. Its ringing echoes mingled strangely with the stealthy rustling of trees, the dull roar of distant waterfalls, the ghostly murmuring about his prow, the indistinct cry of aquatic birds, and all the

vague, mysterious whispers of the forest. He sang with spirit and *abandon*, with trials or diminishings on high or lingering notes, such as he would not have dared to attempt before listeners. Heaven be thanked for all its gifts, and especially for the great gift of song ! The prison gates rolled back, the daily shackles slipped off, the liberty-loving soul rose with the true lyric joy that enters into freedom's grandeur.

When Wrayburn entered the North Star Jack was seated with a glass of sangaree before him, playing cards with a couple of Quentin men and Enoch Penrhyn, with whom he had come over that evening. Enoch looked a little sheepish, as if self-accused of folly. He was regarded in Swanneck as rather a *mauvais sujet* ; but he too was a Cornishman, and for this reason, or perhaps for stronger reasons of his own, he had a great partiality for Wrayburn, and invariably defended his

character from the aspersions cast upon it by prejudice.

Several glasses of sangaree on top of "chain-lightning" were too much for Jack's constitution. His face was greatly flushed, his eyes were glassy, and he stared profoundly, with more gravity than sense, at the cards in his hand.

"Come along, Jack; it's time you were getting home," said Wrayburn, touching him on the shoulder.

Jack shook his head, looking up with a stare of owl-like solemnity. "No, no, Mis'r Wraybur', mus' finish 'ish ga'; winning all 'fore me."

Qui s'excuse s'accuse. "I didn't set him on to play," said Penrhyn. "I was only looking after him."

"You didn't forget to look after yourself, too, Pen," Wrayburn rejoined, for poor Penrhyn was rather the worse for drink. "Now, Jack, aren't you coming?"

Jack had upset the sangaree, and in trying to repair the damage his cards were spilt upon the floor. He was now down upon his knees, groping about for them, and hitting his head against the table-legs.

“It’s rather cool of you to come in here to spoil play. There are bets on, and the youngker has been winning so far,” one of the players objected in an aggrieved tone, languidly spinning a beautiful new eagle in the air, and catching it on the back of his hand.

“Well, take back your stakes,” Wrayburn replied, observant of the eagle. “How much has he won?”

“Oh, it’s not the *muchness*; it’s having the whole thing made into a mess. He’s only won a couple of these.”

Wrayburn took up the coin and looked at it. It was an American ten-dollar piece, new and glistening. “I think it’s genuine,” he said, putting it down.

The owner sprang up angrily. "What do you mean?" he said, with a savage oath. "Are you come here to insult us?"

"No," Wrayburn answered dryly, "but there's usually such a paucity of gold in Quentin, especially such handsome money as this, that I doubted its genuineness. Anyhow, it's too much for Jack to win. I know your little way of 'setting springes to catch woodcocks,' and I won't have it. Your revenge will mean horns and hoofs next time; so we'll just set free those pretty birds. Here, Jack, give up whatever flotsam and jetsam you've gathered this evening."

Jack had just regained the perpendicular, looking yet more flushed and staring from his exertions. The cards began to flutter down from his fingers again as he tried to arrange his hand. He looked after them with astonishment and grave disapproval of such flighty conduct.

“Never shaw ’sh ’diclous ’shings; ’m not goin’ after ’m again, anyhow;” and he flopped heavily sideways upon his chair.

“Come, we’re going home; it’s late,” said Wrayburn, persuasively, taking an energetic hold of his arm. “Hand their money over, and let’s go.”

But Jack, getting the idea that Wrayburn was trying to despoil him of his money, waxed indignant, and began to talk loudly in an excited, high-pitched voice. Not content with threatening, but willing to execute his threats, he tried hard to pull off his coat. As fast as he clutched first one cuff and then the other, and got the coat half off, Penrhyn calmly hitched it up behind at the neck, and held it effectually in position, while a laughing group gathered round, glad of any little fillip to their jaded spirits. Their injurious laughter, added to Wrayburn’s felonious intentions, made Jack furious. He plunged like a young horse

and struck out wildly, offering to punch the collective heads of Quentin. With some difficulty Wrayburn avoided random blows on his own head as he searched for the money in the lad's pockets.

"Here you are," he said, handing Jack's winnings back to the losers. "I'll make it all right with him; and now we'll be off. Are you coming, Penrhyn? If not, lend me your boat, and you can have my canoe instead."

"Oh, I'm coming too, of course," said Penrhyn, assisting to lead and pull Jack out of the North Star. Most of Schmidl's patrons accompanied the trio, and those loitering citizens outside who had nothing else to do followed the noisy procession. Once in the open air, Jack's legs were seized with sudden weakness, and he evinced a strong desire to lie down that was even more troublesome than his scuffling. Protesting loudly all the way that his aforetime

friends and well-wishers were joined in a conspiracy to rob, cheat, and in divers ways maltreat him, he was gradually hauled down to the landing-place. At the short flight of wet and slippery steps leading down to the little wooden slip at which the boats were moored, Jack could no longer retain his foothold. Sitting on the top step, he passionately harangued the Queen's lieges, until he was unceremoniously taken neck and heels and lifted into the boat. Once in it he absolutely refused to sit down; yet, when he rose, his own unsteadiness and the rapid swaying of the boat with every movement deprived him of his equilibrium. Had he not been firmly gripped he would have lurched over the gunwales. Some good Christian standing on the steps held aloft a lighted pine-knot; but either the confused light and lurid shadows thrown by its uncertain flare, or some dimness in Penrhyn's own vision, made his unfastening

of the painter a very tedious and difficult business.

"Hold still there, can't you? You'll pitch me over on my head in a moment," he said, looking round, while still stooping, and getting a little artificial support himself from the fact that the rope he was supposed to be unfastening was still fast. "Stow that fellow under a seat, and sit on him. It's the only way you'll keep her steady; she's that full now we shall have to bale her out first thing before we start."

"Whenever we *do* start," said Wrayburn. "Haven't you got that rope undone yet?"

"No, nor can't see what's got the blamed thing. Tip the light a little this way."

The blazing torchlight, with its fitful glare, while lighting up the figures of the men in the boat and on the slip, only made the surrounding darkness of night and water more impenetrable.

"We'd better have a 'Form of Prayer for

those at Sea,' I think. They'll hardly make Swanneck to-night," said a wag among the group about the steps.

"Oh, if they put their trust in Providence and take a pilot they may get there some time to-morrow," said another, jocosely. "Here, you Jake, take the light and go with 'em."

"Not if I know it," answered Jake, pushing his hands deeper into his pockets. "I ain't so fond of water-parties where you've got to pull about sixteen mile."

"Houp-la! sonny, there you go again," cried a cheery voice from the crowd, as Jack gave another heavy lurch to the side. "You nearly did for Pen that time. Nasty thing, water, to stand on, ain't it? Such an uncommon lot of *give* in it. Guess you'll have to starch and iron them legs of yours to get the creases out of 'em, and make 'em fit for Sunday-go-to-meetin'!"

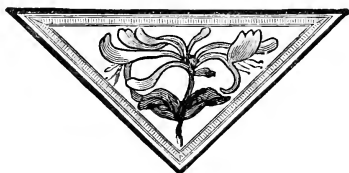
"Penrhyn," said Wrayburn, half-laughing,

“I think we shall have to stay the night in Quentin. I can’t get him to sit quiet; and if I havè to hold him all the time, you can’t possibly pull the three of us the whole way.”

“Yes, yes, I can,” Penrhyn answered readily. “He’ll go to sleep just now. You keep him still awhile and I’ll pull right enough, and maybe we’ll be able to get the sail up after a bit. We’re off now; mind his head!” he added, as he unshipped his oars.

“Ay, ay, get home as quick as you can, Pen, consistently with safety. You’ll be spanked as it is, and put to bed when you get back, for staying out after hours,” said the humourist, referring to the well-known henpecking character of Penrhyn’s wife. “We’ll go straight away and see about grappling irons, in case we hear anybody’s missing. They’re off at last—‘the anchor’s weighed; farewell, farewell, the anchor’s weighed.’”

Other voices caught up the well-known refrain. To the hoarse echoes of the old song that Wrayburn used to sing in Longbridge so as to draw tears from Mr. Vanburgh's eyes, he bore homeward in the wobbling boat the helpless heir of the Lansdells.





CHAPTER VIII.

THE next day Jack awoke very late, feeling wretched enough—shaky, headachy, hot, irritable, and altogether out of sorts. His remembrances of the previous night were very confused and indistinct, but as the bed at the opposite side of the room had evidently not been slept in, he concluded they had reached home at some hour of the morning that made Wrayburn think it not worth while to go to bed. As he lay and tried to rally his memory, the loss of his money after winning it was the only incident he could clearly recall; and the thought of that made him savage. In his

irritability he wished, yet dreaded, to have a regular quarrel with Wrayburn.

There was not a sound in the other room, but presently the door of communication opened, and the master of the house looked in.

"You're awake, then?" he said, and, disappearing for a few moments, returned with a cup of coffee in his hand. Jack sat up and took the coffee, but declined to eat.

"How do you feel? You look seedy enough," Wrayburn said, seating himself on the side of the bed.

"I don't feel very bright," Jack replied grimly, without much sign of repentance.

"You should have taken my advice, and kept away from that place," said the other. "Red-hot pokers are not good for the insides of *adolescentuli*."

"Why did you take my money from me?" Jack asked resentfully. "I had won it

fairly ; and what was the good of winning it, for you to go and give it back ? ”

“ I didn’t think you were so green, Jack. Do you suppose that lot were going to let you win all night ? The fellow you were beside is one of the greatest rips in Quentin. I vexed his righteous soul last night by suggesting his money was a fraud, like himself, and he began to bounce at once. But I remember about four years ago he was left for dead, for having too many aces in his hand.”

“ Others play with him ; he’s quite at home at Schmidl’s. I never saw him before, but Penrhyn seemed to think it was all right, and he must know him.”

“ Poor Pen is so choice in the company he keeps, that, if you get to know all his friends, you’ll know a queer set of rowdies. The further you keep away from them the better, and, to put you out of harm’s way, I’ve written to Dr. Chadwick to tell him

you'll be going back to him at once for a few months, until I see what's to be done next, since the farming has turned out a failure."

"Going back to Dr. Chadwick's!" Jack cried with alarm.

"Don't you wish to go home? You've often enough said so."

"*Home*—yes," Jack exclaimed passionately, "but not back to school. All the fellows will laugh at me. You're doing it on purpose to disgrace me. It's mean, shameful!"

"Now, we'll not have any more of that, if you please. If you have your wish and return home, where are you to go if not to school?"

"I don't know, but——"

"Nor do I either; I know of no other place for the present. Far from wishing to disgrace you, I wish to hinder you from disgracing yourself, which you will do if you stay here much longer. Don't begin one of your tirades; I won't have it. I've put up

with a good deal since you've been here, but I tell you plainly I'm not inclined to put up with it much longer."

As he spoke Wrayburn rose and returned to the other room ; and Jack, a little quelled by this unusually determined front, lay down again in silence to brood vengefully over his unjust and bitter fate. Poverty and dependence were strengthening all his very worst characteristics. Wrayburn did not tell him that he had also written to Jack's relatives—to his grandfather, Sir Edmund Ironsides Lansdell ; to his uncle, the Bishop of Straightlace ; and to his aunt, Lady Quintessence,—putting before them "a plain unvarnished tale," and urging pretty strongly the claims of this unrecognized cadet of their house. Not knowing what answer they might vouchsafe, if indeed they returned any answer, he would raise no false or disquieting hopes in the boy's mind by telling him what he had done. Privately he was of opinion

that they could not but respond generously to such a reasonable and eloquent appeal. This great diplomatist was so pleased with his morning's work that he had further written to Ted, asking him to back up the cause of the young Lansdells and bring the weight of his influence to bear upon the elders. The five letters lay ready upon his desk awaiting post-day at Quentin.

When Jack recovered from his little bout of dissipation and emerged from seclusion, he was civil but rather sullen. All traces of petulance were gone from Wrayburn, who had returned to his gardening, painting, carving, modelling, writing, or drawing, one or other of these employments usually occupying his spare time.

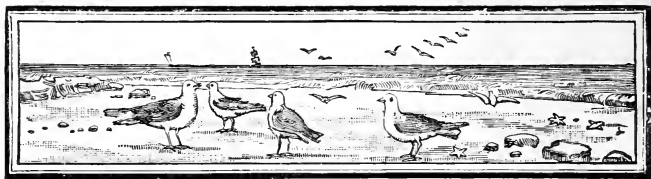
If a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, a little genius is still more dangerous; for he who has it has also the peculiar temperament which accompanies genius, and that indisposes him for drudgery or perseverance

sufficient to carry him onward to the grandeur of success which compensates great genius. Wrayburn had written enough during his years in Swanneck to fill a dozen volumes; but his manuscripts lay all undigested and unarranged—a lot of rubbish, he knew, with some pearls among the rubbish, had he made a pliant hour in which to seek and separate them. He drew and modelled as he sang—involuntarily almost, and because he pleased,—gave his pictures and figures to his neighbours, just as he divided his rare seeds when they arrived, or gave away his plants if they came to anything like perfection. People never value anything so lightly bestowed. The Swanneckers took his artistic gifts as they took his eatable gifts — with good-humoured indifference. They were ignorant of the fact that by his own experiments, by studying the laws of plant-life, and the properties in the soil which each species could best assimilate,

he had introduced, and successfully cultivated, many valuable fruits and vegetables foreign to that climate. Because he did not use hard botanical names, or talk learnedly about them, they looked upon his seeds and saplings as the amusements of an idle man, until they saw there was a market value in them. In like manner they thought nothing of his pictures because he, in his humble way, was a follower of Fra Angelico, who painted, not for money, but the love of God. It would have surprised them had they been told that a man who could easily have made a very tolerable living any day as an artist, author, musician, or practical gardener, was content to make the world richer without charging for it, or taking the bread out of the mouths of other men who had nothing but their head work or handiwork to live upon. Such modesty and self-suppression, coupled with so much natural skill, is too uncommon to be readily believed in a day

when every little talent or bit of newly acquired knowledge is seeking high and low for publicity. Therefore Swanneck preferred to agree with McFarlane in regarding Wrayburn as a bloated aristocrat, even believing that as he gave so willingly he could have given a great deal more if he chose, and that they were justified in grumbling at him for withholding.





CHAPTER IX.

A FEW days later, as Wrayburn was passing the schoolhouse he heard the sound of music issuing thence. People who make a steady effort to appear always in excellent spirits get into the habit of rather overdoing it. Wrayburn was always singing or whistling in these days. He ceased his merry *Cloches de Corneville* whistling now, and paused to listen. Some one, without regard to time or tune, was trying to hammer out that lovely air of Mendelssohn's that, in the Scotch Psalter, is known under the name of *Augsburg*. He pushed the door open and entered quietly.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" he said, detecting the culprit in the person of Agnes McFarlane.

Agnes started, and a vivid crimson glowed in her cheeks when she saw who was advancing up the room towards her.

"I was just whiling away the hour," she said, as if some explanation was necessary.

"But you've got that all wrong," he said, intent on seeing fair play to Mendelssohn. "Rise a moment, and I'll show you how it goes."

Agnes made way for him, and sitting down he went over the air slowly once or twice. "Now sing it," he said.

Standing just behind him she instantly obeyed, although she had little voice, and was nervous about using it. She sang flat, and sang false, but sang to the bitter end, with the single purpose of detaining him as long as possible now that he was here. When the end was reached he looked over his shoulder at her with an odd smile.

"I think if you practise it every day for about a month you'll get to know it quite well," he said.

"Oh, then, I will," the girl said innocently, with such unconsciousness of ridicule that he instantly repented of his malice, and began to explain the difference between crotchets and quavers, the meaning of dotted notes, rests, sharps, flats, and naturals. Agnes thanked him, but without much show of interest. There was some cloud over the girl; she seemed in low spirits, and duller than usual.

"Are you very anxious to play?" he asked.

"I'd like to, well enough," she replied. "I was beginning; but since Miss Mary left there's been no one to teach me, and I've forgotten nearly all. Eh! but she could play beautiful, couldn't she?"

"Yes," he said laconically, moving his fingers over the keys, as if playing, but eliciting no sounds.

"She could do everything well, I think," said Agnes, regretfully. "I never saw any one like her."

"Your experience has been rather limited, remember."

"Oh ay; but there was no one ever *here* like her at all. She was so much the lady, and had such lovely white hands, such a nice way of speaking, such elegant manners; oh, I was just awfully fond o' Miss Mary," she added wistfully.

"And she was fond of you," he returned, reluctant to carry on this kind of conversation, yet not displeased with the girl's artless admiration of his Mary.

"Humph! Mebbe she was, and mebbe she only pretended she was," said Agnes, with a sniff and toss of the head.

"Why should she pretend?" he asked, struck by the sudden metallic sharpness of her tone.

"What for should I know? To suit

herself, I suppose. Why did she pretend anything except to serve her own purpose? Oh, the horrid woman, the shameful woman! Was there ever anything so abominable? To come here deceiving every one, making us all in love with her, thinking so much of her, that there was nobody like her; and she to be so bad all the time, and such a double-faced wretch. Oh, the *hateful* woman!"

"Is the girl taking leave of her senses?" Wrayburn exclaimed in astonishment. "I don't understand you. Of whom are you speaking? or what have you got hold of?"

Agnes had grown very pale, but the hard light of jealousy shone in her blue eyes, and though her lips were tremulous she tried to carry things off with a high hand.

"I'm just speaking o' Miss Mary Ford, that was so fond o' me. Was she fond of *you*, d'ye think, or did she only pretend that too?" she asked defiantly.

"Of me?" he said; then added coldly,

“I beg your pardon, Agnes, but whatever your own opinion of her may be, pray keep it to yourself; no one shall say a word against her to me.”

“Ah! after all she’s done ye’ll yet defend her,” cried Agnes, with a reckless little laugh. “After disgracing herself, and ruining you, ye’ll yet stand by that wicked woman, and, as father says, be partaker of her sins that ye may hide them, and make believe she was just as good as every one thought her. Mother says ye’ve stood it out like a man, an’ she respects you for yere silence and yere pride. But it’s no pride; it’s that you stick to her yet in your secret heart in spite of all she’s done against you, isn’t it?”

Wrayburn was instantly illuminated. He understood that Jack had taken his revenge, and that this garrulous little fool was simply rushing in where more sophisticated people would have feared to tread.

“Agnes,” he said, after a moment’s silence, taking her by the wrist and drawing her round from behind him so that he could see her fully, “what have you heard?”

Her sudden flash of temerity was as suddenly extinguished the moment his hand touched hers. She stood beside him vibrating with nervousness, and somewhat terrified at what she had done.

“You have heard, perhaps, that I was married?” he said, willing to relieve her embarrassment.

“Yes,” she admitted, with much hesitation.

“Well, that’s a sin the world commits daily, and doesn’t seem much ashamed of,” he said, with assumed indifference, for the discovery of Jack’s treachery had stung him to the quick.

“Oh, it wasn’t the marrying, but the *kind* of marrying—such trickery!—that’s the disgrace,” she said. “It was bigamy, so they call it, for her to go and marry you when

she knew she'd got another husband; an' bigamy's an awfu' sin, punishable by the law."

With some amusement he surveyed the simple lassie repeating with bated breath the summing up and judgment she had heard from her elders.

"It has quite changed your whole feeling towards the Miss Mary you were so awfully fond of, hasn't it?"

"It just has," she replied, with the emphasis of reawakened anger and yearning over the shattered faith of former days.

"The law will not trouble either of us," said he. "There is not on God's earth this day a purer, better, lovelier woman anywhere than Mary Loxdale. But I'm not going to let her be put upon her defence," he added imperatively.

Agnes regarded him as the helpless victim of a mad infatuation it wrung her very heart to witness.

“Oh, why did you let the woman marry you? Couldn’t she rest easy anywhere at home, that she must needs come all the way here to work her mischief? What did she hope to gain by it when she knew she had a husband? And she looked so meek and mild!” she cried incoherently in her exasperation, putting out one hand in an aimless fashion as he rose to go. Something in her expression made him pause.

“You’ve made a mistake—got hold of the wrong end of the story, and a wrong impression altogether,” he said rather sternly; “and if you were any one else I’d let you keep your false impression, for I don’t see what right any one has to force a secret from a man, or to gibbet him because he’ll not be forced. But because you’ve been my little friend and companion for so long, I don’t want to have you troubled by miserable thoughts. Look here, Agnes! I knew all about her husband; but when we married

we had every reason to believe he was dead. When we found he was not dead I had to clear out, of course, and that's all. It's not much to speak about, but I don't thank those who have made me speak."

Agnes looked at him with wide eyes. "But why don't ye tell the truth if that's it?" she exclaimed. "Why will ye let them go on thinking ill, and speaking ill of you, all the time when ye could easily set them right?"

"I'll not set them right. It's no concern of theirs if they didn't push themselves into it; and I'm not called upon to court the favour of people who are always ready to believe evil."

"But if there's no evil ye should abstain from the appearance of evil," she persisted, with so good an imitation of her father's admonitory manner that Wrayburn smiled derisively.

"Go home and play with your dolls, child,

or tie up your hair with blue ribbons, and don't be prosing about the appearance of evil. They've been talking all sorts of objectionable talk before you, I can see. When did this nonsense begin?"

Agnes blushed up to the roots of her hair, and her head drooped as her mental glance swept over the past few months. "It's been going on since you came back here with Jack," she said in dire confusion.

"With Jack! What has Jack got to do with it?" he asked sharply, with surprise and rising suspicions.

"I don't know; but they—they seemed to think it was—was *queer*," she faltered desperately.

"Why has no monument been raised to those unique women of Bedford whose excellent conversation John Bunyan overheard?" he demanded bitterly, looking round him as if addressing some invisible audience. "It's on record that they actually

sat and talked together without resorting to the stimulus of scandalous gossip and back-biting. An unheard-of thing—an unparalleled thing !”

He was walking away quickly down the room when Agnes darted after him and captured him at the door.

“Ye won’t say it was I told you, will ye ? If you do they’ll lay all the blame on me ; they’ll say I’m a mischief-maker, and that it’s all my fault.”

Her piteous tone, and the tears running down her distressed young face, touched a soft spot in his heart.

“So you are a mischief-maker !” he said ; but he led her back a few paces into the room, and sat down beside her on one of the benches. “I’ve no intention of repeating to any one what you have told me, so console yourself. Indeed, I scarcely know what it is you have told me. The people here, for lack of something better to do, have been manu-

facturing a mystery about me, and embellishing it according to their different tastes. Isn't it so?"

Agnes shook her head slowly, at the same time pressing her handkerchief against her wet eyes. "It was Jack," she sobbed. "If Jack had held his tongue no one here would have known of your—your marriage."

Wrayburn looked silently at this girl, who was eighteen years his junior. It was not easy to talk with her; she was very young; and he had respect for the ideal maiden that was not yet wholly ground out of her.

"I don't suppose Jack had a very accurate knowledge of the affair," he said at length, "but he has purposely been as inaccurate as possible. He has tried to make it appear that there has been all kinds of disgraceful work—that I was the victim, or the abettor, of a shameful fraud—and he is well aware there is nothing of the sort. You can tell them so if you like, Agnes."

Agnes sighed, but it was a sigh of relief. She felt rather cheered and flattered by his tone, and straightway regained a little courage. "And all that about Jack isn't true?" she asked, with a confidential little air, and edging a trifle nearer.

"What about him?" he said, with such a hardening expression in his gloomy eyes that she at once felt at an immeasurable distance from him.

"I don't know," she answered feebly, in a depressed tone, nervously smoothing and folding the damp handkerchief.

"I don't think you do," he said curtly. "It seems to me you're all pretty mad here, with the unlimited licence you give to your tongues, and terribly sceptical for such staunch believers. Evidently Jack's talent for spinning yarns has provided food for endless conjectures. Heaven only knows what you've been making up; but it's sure to be something discreditable, and I can give a tolerably good guess at it."

He would not listen to anything more, but stood up and stalked off in a great rage, while poor empty-headed Agnes, after sitting still a moment to realize the effect of her own fatuity, threw herself down on the bench and cried out against the unreasonable cruelty of the whole hard world, with the stormy tears and meaningless invective of a slighted, love-sick girl.

When Wrayburn reached home, after walking about some time lashing his anger, Jack was there, lolling at his ease in [the most comfortable chair, with his feet extended before him on another chair. He was smoking a cigarette, and trying to emit the smoke in a way that should make it assume fantastic forms as it ascended. At this sight Wrayburn's anger flashed up with sudden fury. Warned that a storm of some sort was about to burst, or that the devil he had long tormented was broken loose, Jack quickly removed his cigarette, took down his

feet, and sat up with a startled expression and vaguely apprehensive feeling. There is something impressive and alarming in a white heat of anger as in all suggestions of unproved forces. Jack quailed, as even Loxdale had quailed, before the strange exhibition of boundless hatred curbed by passionate self-control that showed Wrayburn to be a dangerous enemy.

For when he spoke his low, incisive tones were in singular contrast with his blazing eyes, unnatural pallor, the raised veins beating in his neck and temples, and the evident tempest that possessed him. If his self-control once failed, woe betide himself or his enemy. For the time being he looked like one who would stick at nothing. Again the half-formed thought flashed through Jack's mind that if this had not been a good man what an uncommonly bad one he would have been.

The more sympathetic, incorruptible, and

high-spirited a man is, the more impetuous will naturally be his rebound from unkindness, injustice, perfidy, and imperfection of every kind except the imperfection that wins his compassion. Incapable of treachery, he abhors the traitor; unable to sympathize with cowardice, he spurns the coward; holding truth to be the essential foundation of all men's security, he regards the liar as his most inveterate enemy. Falsehood and ingratitude are felt as an outrage by a generous, high-minded man. It is "man's ingratitude" and the memory of "benefits forgot" that bring the madness of King Lear. Wrayburn felt thus outraged; that he so felt, not for the first or second time in his life, added but fresh fuel to his wrath. As he stood silently for a moment in front of Jack, just where a broad shaft of sunshine slanting through the uncurtained window focussed its rays upon him, it seemed to the lad that his eyes were positively phosphorescent. Well-

set eyes are capable of great variety in shade as well as expression ; dark grey eyes look violet or green under the excitement of joy or anger.

“ Jack,” he said, in a restrained voice, with the vibration of strong emotion in it, “ you are a most despicable coward, traitor, and liar. If you go on as you’ve begun, the day will come when even the very mother who bore you will curse you in her heart, as I do at this moment. You have eaten my bread for years, and have stabbed me in the back at last.”

The accused knew that he was found out, and did not dare to offer excuse, apology, or explanation, for those terrible eyes were going into him like fiery gimlets, and an undefined feeling of alarm took possession of him. What increased this alarm was the fact that Wrayburn persistently kept one hand behind him. Jack was convinced there was something wrong about that hand.

“For God’s sake, Mr. Wrayburn, don’t look at me like that!” he exclaimed, moving restlessly.

“What is it that you fear?” Wrayburn asked, in the same suppressed tones. “You think I have a revolver here, and am going to get up a bit of melodrama, perhaps? You are afraid of being shot, though you were not afraid to try and blast an innocent woman’s name to gratify your own miserable spite, nor to betray the man who trusted you, and who has stood your friend for twelve years.” He paused, and withdrew his hand from behind him. It was bleeding from a long, jagged cut across the knuckles. “I struck my hand against a tree,” he said, “that’s all. A little sticking-plaster will soon set that to rights. But what will heal the breach that you have made? I never understood the cur’s nature you have in you, until to-day; and I’ve done with you. There could never be any trust or friendship between us again.

Unless your grandfather answers my letter and agrees to take you home, you may go to the devil, for all I care. I'm sick and tired of it all. See that your things are packed, and that you are ready to start by the time I come back, for I'll not break bread with you again under my own roof."

With that he swung out of the house as stormily as he had entered.

The attack had been so sudden and vehement that for some time Jack sat almost stupefied, unable in his excitement to comprehend the change of front which had occurred within the space of a few moments. What odious Swannecker had been telling tales and revealing his duplicity to Wrayburn? What was this about his grandfather possibly receiving him? What was the meaning of this instantaneous going home in disgrace? Unused to think rapidly himself, and still more unused to watch the processes of rapid thought in others, he could

make nothing of it all, so surrendered himself passively to bewilderment, and set about packing up.

As hour after hour passed he became restless and very uneasy. "Going to the devil," or in other words being thrown upon his own resources, was not a pleasant alternative if that grandfather remained obdurate. Again and again he was impelled by his uneasiness to go outside and listen intently. Although he knew that Wrayburn did not carry arms, the look in his face as he left the house haunted Jack most uncomfortably. He knew not what he feared; but a tale that Wrayburn had once told him in a careless, incidental way, with only a hint at details, kept returning to his memory. How, tired out with months of aimless wandering, the weary, disappointed man just settling down and trying to adapt himself to a wilderness, maddened when he looked back, sore-hearted and despairing when he looked

forward, had in sudden disgust held a pistol to his head, resolved to make a desperate end of everything, when his dog leaping upon him had spoiled his attempt and changed his purpose.

That tale, bald and colourless as it had been told to him, looked more grisly to Jack now when he thought of it as he waited alone in the silent house filled with mournful shadows of impending night. To one of his gregarious nature such stillness and solitude were insupportable. When all his belongings had been sadly gathered together he would have very gladly gone down to some of the neighbouring houses; but the fear of meeting there only with fresh disgrace and reproach restrained him.

"I don't see why the fellow needed to make such a fuss about a trifle," he said to himself gloomily, kicking a pebble before him, and following its zigzag course as he walked up and down in front of the house.

“ Anyhow, I don’t care a straw. What is it to me if he likes to go on like a lunatic? I didn’t intend it should come to his ears just yet—not till I was well out of it; but of course I can’t help it if these wretched fools have let it leak out. Confounded idiots! I didn’t give it to them for gospel either; I only said that was my impression of the affair. He can have forty wives if he likes, with a difficulty tacked to each one of ’em, for all I care. I wish my mother would keep her tales to herself. She gets hold of things in her stupid way from hints that old Probyn lets fall—tales without a beginning or end, and hardly any middle to them, and gets me into trouble with them. If she chooses to imagine things it’s her fault, not mine; it’s nothing to me what Wrayburn does. *I* know nothing, and can’t help it if he likes to get himself mixed up with a clanjamfry of married women. He goes and gets spoony on a woman he met here in

a touch-and-go fashion and knew nothing about, and rushes off to England to marry her there and then red-hot, only to find there was some other husband in the background. And then he's as indignant as if I'd been the madman instead of himself. It disgusts me when I think of mother making herself so cheap and humble to that milk-and-water lahdy-dahdy woman he called his wife. And I've eaten his bread for years, have I? If I have, that's more of mother's sensible doings. Instead of pitching well into old Ironsides, and *making* him look after his grandsons, as it was his business to do, she sits down contentedly to earn twenty or thirty pounds a year for herself, and lets Wrayburn take us in tow. What's the good of all her saving and scrimmaging, that I'm perfectly sick of hearing about, when she has left it in his power to tell me to my face that he has kept me from the gutter? It's quite ridiculous how women can be so silly.

Just wait a bit. If it's true that he's been writing to old Ironsides, and negotiating the transference of Lansdell, junior, I'll let them see if they'll always trample on me like this. I'll pay back some old scores then."

Darkness, hunger, and cold combined to bring his troubled soliloquy to an end. The lamps were unlit, the fire had died down in the store, and he had had no supper. When he went indoors he got some food and then went straight to bed, for the sight of those trunks and strapped-up valises struck him with a chill feeling of present loneliness, and unknown changes coming at the close of a most unsatisfactory episode in his opening career.

Sleep did not visit him as usual. All night he kept waking and listening for Wrayburn's step. But the house was still silent and Wrayburn had not returned, when the full morning sunshine streaming in upon his face awoke him from a late sleep. Anger

began again to mingle with anxiety at finding himself thus ignored and deserted.

“Very well,” he said aloud, “two can play at this game. If he chooses to come home he’ll find I’m not here, and let’s see how *he* will like waiting.”

When he had dressed himself, he cut another ration of food, and taking the little kettle and pannikin that they used whenever they camped out, he went off to take his last breakfast at Swanneck in the woods.

At the foot of a fine old cedar, where its wide boughs shaded him pleasantly, he made his fire, boiled his kettle, and ate his solitary meal.

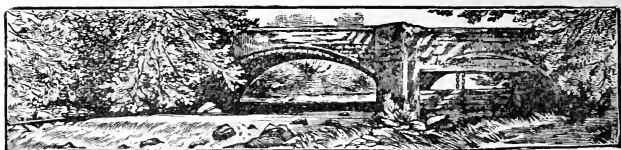
He was still on Wrayburn’s ground, but not very far off Fanshawe’s lumberers were at work in the forest. The voices of the men and the stroke of their axes were borne to him occasionally on the still air. It was very pleasant sitting in this verdant, shadowy spot. The bright sunshine of an early spring

morning lay broad and golden on the open glades, and the faint breeze was laden with a pungent balsamic odour of the pines.

Involuntarily a softened feeling of regret stole over Jack. Wherever his lot might be cast, whatever chances of good or evil fortune might attend him, never again under any skies would he rest so securely as here in the amplitude of nature's embrace. Only kindly reminiscences of Swanneck remained with him now that he was leaving it. Imperceptibly, and in spite of himself, all rancour faded from his mind. Disagreeable circumstances, which he had separated and magnified by his own selfish conceits, looked trivial enough now when viewed with the mass. Particular events cannot be detached from the general when all are being left behind ; and now that he was going, all things wore a softened, modified, and homogeneous aspect.

“I should like to go and have a look at it all for the last time,” he said to himself as he rose and followed the winding wooded slopes until he reached the river and the saw-mill.





CHAPTER X.

VERY few in this world get their heart's inmost desire, or get it in the way they intended, or, getting it, are allowed to keep it. By far the greater number are obliged to content themselves as well as they can with agreeable fictions ; hence much of this bustle about domesticities and children, fashion, art, politics, missions, Dorcas-meetings, ragged schools, and so forth ; the vacuum which nature abhors must be filled up somehow.

Mary had always been too proud and self-reliant a woman to cheat herself with harmless pretences. Her endeavour had been,

not to forget or to disguise, but to face a recognized misery with stern front and daily courage. That which prostrates the weak only tempers the strong ; and she had submitted herself almost without complaint to a severe discipline. Yet, since Loxdale's death, that wedding in Swanneck had looked at times such a very distant possibility that she could scarcely bear to think of it.

On the night following her return from Loxdale's funeral she said to her grandfather, "If we must still sorrow, we must at least sorrow *for* him, and not *because* of him."

And he answered with phlegmatic melancholy, without removing his gaze from the red heart of the fire, where the distant past continually formed itself before him, "Yes, Mary ; but no amount of sorrow can undo what has been done. Look at me ; look at your own face. We are his handiwork."

She shuddered at those bitter words

from the broken, hopeless old man whose mood admitted no alleviation, and moved restlessly as she saw her own haggard face reflected in a mirror. Yielding to an atmosphere of profound dejection, she listened to an inner voice that began to murmur of still further renunciation and endurance, and her eyes were drowned in tears with excess of sadness. Wrayburn's ghost seemed to rise before her with reproachful eyes. Weary and worn with a divided duty, she was struck by the sadness of her own voice as she sat down beside the old man, and, taking his hand in hers, said—

“Naomi has still her Ruth ; and whatever else is lost or gone, they will always remain together.”

Mr. Vanburgh shook his head, incapable just then of appreciating her strong fidelity.

“Ah, the male Naomi is but a selfish creature, doubtless, and Ruth will be thinking of her Boaz,” he said.

“Do not say so,” she answered earnestly. “Others, besides myself, might have been less unhappy had my thoughts never strayed beyond this room. From first to last it has been nothing but wrongdoing and repentance, justification and again repentance.”

He could follow her train of thought without explanation, and knew that she was humbling herself before both the dead and the living, for whose griefs she took all blame with that ready self-accusation which is the egotism of generous natures.

“It will pass,” he said, meaning that her present sacrificial mood would not last. “And I love him too, and have no wish to stand in his way. What will be, will be.”

Mr. Vanburgh had never recovered the shock of Loxdale’s reappearance. Ever since that eventful night he had been standing, as the saying is, with one foot in the grave. From that hour he had sunk into piteous infirmity. Loxdale’s tragic end was

a fresh trial to his nerves, a violent upheaval of troubled memories, that made his despondency only more incurable.

Mary's letters to Colonel Wrayburn became more and more brief, vague in tone, dealing only in generalities. The old, she wrote, could not revive like the young. There was such a thing as reparation coming too late. It were well to limit one's expectations, to keep one's mind fixed steadily upon a present duty.

Such correspondence was eminently unsatisfactory to Colonel Wrayburn, who felt that things were drifting helplessly. Spring was returning, yet Mr. Vanburgh's state promised no amendment, and nothing was said about writing to Lawrence. Evidently an infusion of new thought was necessary to stimulate those dismal people in the little house at Longbridge. Either Mr. Vanburgh was dying or he was not dying; and were they all to wait until he died, or else re-

covered? After consultation with Christina, Colonel Wrayburn made a sudden descent upon Longbridge.

He told them he had come to stay a few days with them, and at once made himself at home without further explanations. There was so little affectation in his cordiality, such sunshiny warmth in his cheerfulness, such ready adaptability in speech and action, that they were bound to make him welcome. He warmed the chilled hearts of these two poor mopes, and they were thankful to him as to some deliverer. Before two days were passed their drooping spirits began to revive with a sense of quickened life. His simple presence in the house did more for poor Mr. Vanburgh than a whole college of physicians could have done. Gradually the sick man spoke less of charity, and the grave covering all, and sat less constantly brooding over the fire. On one of those mild days that often come in early

spring, he even was induced to go out into the sunshine, and see how the world looked out-of-doors. Since his illness he had never crossed the door, and had come to believe that never again would he cross it until carried to his burial. This was but one of several gloomy delusions that Colonel Wrayburn contrived to dispel.

Very few of the things Wrayburn had brought home had ever been assigned a definite place among Mr. Vanburgh's household gods. The greater number had been wrapped in their foreign papers again and put away, as mementoes of the dead are put away. Some of these Mary now unpacked under Colonel Wrayburn's instructions, and placed in unobtrusive corners where Mr. Vanburgh might gradually recognize them. It was a great success, this innocent little stratagem. Within a short time he had not only discovered his precious foreign things, but had spoken freely of

Lawrence as he had not done since the night when Wrayburn said good-bye and vanished into exile.

Not as an exile did they speak of him when they gathered around the cheerful hearth that night. Out of the fulness of their hearts they talked, and lingered round his name as if to compensate themselves for all those months of silence; recalling all his quaint ideas, and laughing at his unconventional ways. Many a long day had passed since Mr. Vanburgh was so full of gentle pleasantry and interest. At last he seemed to be recovering from the lethargy which had for months held him like one under the influence of some evil spell. Mary was so rejoiced to see this happy change that she herself became quite animated. Before the evening was over she opened her long-closed piano, and played at her grandfather's request several of his favourite *Lieder*. What a tide of memory

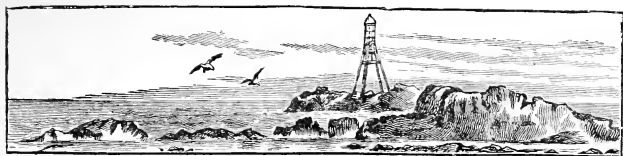
that music set flowing! Her wan face had some tinge of colour, or brightness of expression, that improved it wonderfully. As she played on, unconsciously weaving the old harmonious mazes, she thought of Loxdale less bitterly, with less horror and remorse, than she had yet been able to feel. A more restful feeling stole over her with the familiar music, that calmed the gnawing pain of dissatisfaction and indecision. Perhaps by degrees, she thought, instead of the death's-head which was her daily torment, his sad doom would sink down into her heart, there to abide naturally with all other sad and solemn memories without disturbing their peace.

And while she played softly on and on, winding mechanically through sweet and smoothly flowing intricacies while her thoughts were far away, the two men sat talking in low tones across the fire.

Convinced that the auspicious moment

had come, Colonel Wrayburn boldly attacked his subject, and spoke earnestly of the two lovers. Fluent and reasonable was his exposition. As the sole cause of Mr. Vanburgh's illness had been a crushing load of grief and anxiety, and that load now (God help him!) was removed, there was nothing to prevent his speedy recovery. Could he not support Mary's absence for a few months? How quickly they would pass! She would be home again, bringing her happy bridegroom with her, before there had been time to realize her loss. He, Ted, in his own person, would take her safely to his brother's home, would see them through the marriage service; then, leaving them to their honeymooning, would hasten back to assist in killing the fatted calf for their return. Persisting in his benevolent intention to reunite two most unhappy people, he added that Christina had commissioned him to say that she

also would make one of the party and take care of the bride. Against these arguments Mr. Vanburgh could say not a word; the ground was cut from under him. Objections or excuses were alike vain. He even owned, with evident contrition, that he had been guilty of selfishness, and pleaded his own mental sufferings in extenuation of his indifference to the welfare of those dearest to him. Mary said little while the arrangements for the journey and the date of departure were being discussed; but, when all was finally settled, she stood up and gravely kissed Colonel Wrayburn, who looked for a moment surprised, and then as gravely returned her quaint token of gratitude. When even Christina—*Regina et Imperatrix*—offered her services to the divided lovers, Mary must have been an ungrateful young woman indeed had she not been instantly willing to begin her journey.



CHAPTER XI.

ALL night long the stage had gone on, grinding over a series of roads that seemed specially designed to test the endurance of horseflesh and the steadiness of travellers' nerves. There were but three travellers, and they, grown used to stage-travelling, consoled themselves by remembering the end of their journey was near, and every bump was at least lifting them nearer. When the straining beasts, after pulling up some stiff ascent, at length gained its summit, they would burst suddenly into a gallop, hoofs sliding, sparks flying, down an alarmingly abrupt descent, with a speed and

impetuosity unpleasantly suggestive of Gadarene swine. Anon the stage would rattle with deafening concentration of sound down wild defiles narrowed in irregularly by walls of rock rising precipitously on either hand, and over ground that was half rock and half earth, thickly interknit with naked roots of trees. With a desperate lashing, splashing, creaking, and jolting, some shallow mountain river would be crossed. By the rumbling, thudding sound the travellers would next be aware that an open stretch of treeless, desolate plain was being crossed, where cold winds perpetually rustled over long, coarse grass.

After bits of prairie came more hills, more gorges, more fords, and at last the long night was over. Along the eastern horizon a grey fringe of misty light was visible. Chill blew the wind at dawn, and heavily fell the rain. With cheerless liberality the great clouds emptied themselves as they sped

across the sky, trailing mists like great swaying curtains after them. It was but a passing shower, that left behind a clear sky where stars were growing dim. Rapidly that cold eastern light was widening into a broad band of tender and pearly effulgence warmed by roseate tints.

The tired travellers watched the long-looked-for dawn with all the interest and speculation which are awakened in all save the hopelessly indifferent by sunset and sunrise. As the horses, with drooping heads, wet flanks, and foam-flecked chests, jogged along their last mile, pale stars were swimming in a soft suffusion of pink and saffron that grew warmer and more luminous, until pink had deepened to carmine softened by rosy folds of cloud, and saffron had melted into icy sapphire. At old Sol's awakening the mists fled ghost-like into the forests, or glided up hillsides, and shrank about precipices where never a sunbeam lay. Snow

and mist mingled there together coldly, while ruddy light lay warm upon the mountain-tops. Shaking off rain and darkness, the great pine-woods shone forth amid vapour like gilded spires gleaming through the dusk of gigantic mountain shadows.

One by one those fleecy clouds disappeared; the sun was fully risen in a sky of purest azure, and a genial warmth was diffused through the atmosphere, when the stage pulled up at Mason's store.

Mason's was *the* store of Quentin—the only one that for love or money could produce anything, from a reaper and self-binder to a sewing-needle, from a suit of ready-made clothes to a bottle of patent medicine. It had passed through every phase of building experience, from the dug-out which had been the origin and nucleus of Quentin to the substantial frame-house it now was. Hotel accommodation at Mason's was not much better than at Schmidl's, and con-

siderably dearer ; but it was select—so very select, indeed, that, as hardly any one ever came, no preparation was made for any one coming. Consequently the travellers on their arrival found themselves the centre of as much confusion as if they had dropped upon a strange planet. But as they were very moderate in their expectations, and too tired to be fastidious, they were easily accommodated.

These three travellers were Mary, Colonel Wrayburn, and the Reverend Cyril Audyn. Yes, here was Mary, almost at her journey's end, yet quite unable to realize it. Again and again she felt compelled to go to the window and look at those old brown hills lying away there to the north-west. They were surely real substantial hills, not part only of some dream from which she should presently awake to find herself back in "chaos and old night." Just behind them lay Swanneck. When she stood upon the verandah and

looked along the empty, unfinished, aimless-looking main street of Quentin, it would not greatly have surprised her if Wrayburn himself had come walking past below, on the sunny side which he always favoured. Well might she look back now with easy indulgence on all the troubles of the road.

For Christina's conduct had been what her husband called "trying." When she set out it was not with the least intention of going the whole way, or of being present at that Arcadian wedding; though she kept her own intentions, whatever they were, strictly to herself. Arcadians were little to her taste. She had had enough, and more than enough, of Lawrence Wrayburn, a man of fickle fancies, who could practise forgetfulness as readily as he could profess fidelity. A woman never can quite forgive a lover who has ceased to love *her*; and secretly Christina rather resented her brother-in-law's new attachment. She had no curiosity to

see his home or his wedding ; but she had a curiosity to see something of Canada. When she had seen enough her health should conveniently break down, and the others should go on without her. Her trouble had been to know when and where to break down. Winnipeg she thought might be far enough, and a place offering fair advantages. But when the party reached Winnipeg they found Mr. Audyn there. He had just returned from settling a party of East Londoners at a place further up the country, and was then on his way to Emerson, to visit the Mennonite settlement there before going back to England. From talking with him Christina conceived a strong desire to see the Mennonites, and to humour her whim, the travellers must needs turn aside out of their way. It was on their return to Winnipeg that Christina—no doubt willing to requite Mary for her ready compliance—confided to Audyn her fears

that when the bride reached her destination she would find herself awkwardly situated. There was no clergyman there ; only some much ridiculed " padre," who came at long intervals to hold Divine service and administer the sacraments. If he had just made his pastoral visitation, or would not make it for months to come, there would be nothing for it but a civil marriage. Audyn at once flung himself into the breach, volunteered to accompany the wedding party, and unite these Arcadians.

Having done such a good turn for her neighbours, Christina felt quite justified in breaking down. But hearing there were various pleasant places on ahead, her first attack passed off, and the procession moved on. At this rate it looked as if the ordinary three or four days' journey would extend to as many weeks. Christina, ever wishing to see more, kept getting ill, and getting well again, until they were fairly in

the western province. Here the final breakdown occurred at the hot springs. With fine air and scenery around, and her maid to attend upon her, they left her to recruit her strength, and proceeded on their journey with easy consciences.

Young Audyn was more ascetic than ever, both in appearance and in fact. He looked as if he belonged to some order more severe than the Passionist Fathers themselves, who have three fast days in the week, so pale, meagre, and monkish was his aspect.

On this morning of their arrival in Quentin he was up and out betimes, making a survey of this entirely new ground, and inquiring into its spiritual privileges. The provision for devotions impressed him so unfavourably, that at breakfast-time he intimated that he felt it to be imperatively his duty to hold Divine service in Quentin before proceeding any further.

“Are we expected to attend this service,

Mary?" Colonel Wrayburn asked rather discontentedly, when the energetic Audyn had gone to collect the flock to a very different kind of pasturage from that offered by McFarlane. "Are you going to it?"

"No, I think not," Mary replied. "Some of the people here would be sure to recognize me; and I don't care to be recognized just now; it would only make a fuss."

"Then suppose you and I go straight over to Swanneck at once. Audyn can follow on after he has got through with his services, and we will be all ready for him."

Mary agreed to this proposal, and Colonel Wrayburn left her that he might see about getting a boat to take them over.

She had her own preparations to make for her triumphant entry into Swanneck. It was a very plain wedding garment in which she appalled herself for her third espousal—not even a new garment, but one in which her lord had often seen her, and worn now

for that very reason. Mary's gown was of that silk known as "shot" silk, its colour willow green, dull grey in the shadows between the folds, ruddy gold wherever the light glinted on its surface. As the rustling of green leaves overhead brings back freshly to our memories the sweetness of sunny foregone summers, and sets us dreaming, so the rustle of her old silk dress brought happy memories to Mary, and she too fell a-dreaming.

As one after another she put on all the little fineries that would strike familiarly on Wrayburn's sight, she was penetrated by feelings of the deepest humility. Her own will, strong and fearless as it was, had yet done nothing for her, carved out no road to freedom; while hard indeed had been the unknown roads her sorrowful steps had trodden. In a supremely happy hour it is easy to forgive the unhappy who have suffered for their sins, however black those sins may be. Thankfulness alone remained

with her now—thankfulness, pity, and forgiveness. “Oh, my God, may I never forget Thee at any time!” was the simple utterance that broke from her almost unconsciously, as if—poor, pious soul!—she felt less secure amid the bland promises of a smiling future, than in the bracing air of stern, heart-searching adversity.

At the sound of Colonel Wrayburn’s returning footsteps, she opened the door of her room, and entered the adjoining room with a serenity upon her worn face like the radiance of a calm and moonlight night after a stormy day.

“‘Most gorgeous Lady Blessington’!” Ted exclaimed, making her a profound bow. “How elegant we are, to be sure! And our hair is like threads of silk powdered with gold. No doubt we have been sitting in the sunrays gilding it.”

“Do I look nice?” she asked, smiling.
“Will I do?”

“Do!” he echoed; “I tell you, my dear, you are quite splendid. You look like a rather worldly-minded saint in a stained-glass window, or like a grand lady in some of the old Italian pictures. And what exquisite lace you have!” he added, bending nearer to examine her deep collar and cuffs of fine Mechlin lace.

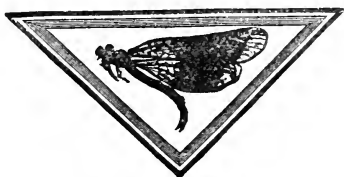
“It’s almost the only bit of real lace I possess,” Mary said contentedly. “I’m glad you commend Lawrence’s taste; for he bought this set for me when we were in Paris for those few days. He gave me this too,” she continued, touching the little pearl and garnet crescent that fastened a broad band of black velvet round her throat. “You know I’m not dressed in the least according to present fashions; in fact, I suppose any London milliner would regard me as a most ridiculous-looking fossil. But I am dressed specially to please some one who hasn’t a notion of fashion; and as I happen to know

his tastes, I consider myself quite a success. What do you think ?”

Colonel Wrayburn regarded her with soft admiring eyes. “A charming woman has no need of fashion ; she is her own fashion,” he replied. “Lawrence may consider himself a lucky fellow. You are both, indeed, remarkably lucky people, and should be thankful. It is not given to every one to be so happy ; few of those whom fate has once divided are ever again united. Now, if you are quite ready, we may as well walk quietly down to the boat. This will all be familiar ground to you, my fair pilgrim. And what a magnificent day we have ! They talk about Italian skies ; but the sky in Italy itself is hardly bluer than this.”

“Yet how I hated it once,” said Mary, “and how my fate seems to draw me hither. When I was on my way here the first time, had I known all that was going to happen, I should have turned and gone straight back to England.”

“If we were only prophets we should all do various things that we *don't* do,” he laughed carelessly. “But, as things have turned out, perhaps it's as well upon the whole that you did not go straight back.”





CHAPTER XII.

THE boat was rowed by two Indians, apathetic in manner, and very sparing of speech. As the two passengers were both occupied with their own private thoughts, it was a silent company that passed up the lake that day.

What a world it was! what an altered world since the day when Mary had come down the selfsame lake on her way home to England, leaving, as it seemed to her, half her life, and all her heart, and all her thoughts behind in Swanneck! The sun was just as bright then as now, the sky as blue, the world as full of light and life and

energy. But she had viewed it all as through a heavy crape veil that cast its own dolorous hue on all around. To her it had been a world empty and formless as air, dry and spent as ashes. She marvelled now how she had found strength to face with courage such a desolate future.

To-day all was different. Nature greeted her with the kiss of peace, smiled upon her, spoke comfortably to her. For the arbitrary human heart, that a wise man has said is deceitful above all things, forces its surroundings to blend with its own fickle inclinations. Mary did not ask herself whether the propitious aspect of things to-day had any more reality than the gloomy presages she had formerly discerned in the same external features. She only knew there was gladness in the very air. Little freshets gurgling down from the hills rang fairy joy-bells in their sparkling flow. Rank grass and rushes growing in marshy inlets of the lake were

lovely to her eyes as softest verdure. Discordant cries of waterfowl among the sedge were musical to her ears as the song of the skylark. Heavy shadows of overhanging woods were as cheering to her spirits as brilliant sunshine. Joy moved upon the mountains, touched the shining water, breathed in the odorous air. Light and gladness as of "a morning without clouds" were embodied in the stillness and composure of her own bright face.

When the curve of the lake was reached, when the well-known islands came in sight, she felt she could have kissed the dirty hands of those lethargic boatmen. Every dip of their oars was bringing her nearer and nearer to him whom to meet again was so much joy that it was almost pain.

Would he be at home? At this early hour he was not likely to have left the house yet. She pictured him vividly to herself, standing at his open door, his tall head

nearly touching the lintel, lounging and smoking as many a time she had seen him. She imagined his start of amazement on recognizing the two strangers coming towards him ; saw the sudden erection of his indolent figure, the quick blood surging in his warm, brown face ; felt once more the thrilling clasp of his hand ; stood again in the light of kind, kindling eyes ; and lost herself in a dreamy rapture.

Women in old days who received their dead to life again have left no record of those momentous reunions. Devoutly, with love and awe and wonderment, Mary was coming now as to the opening of a tomb.

In many minds ghosts are associated with tombs. There had been a time when the fear of ghosts distracted Mary. This unworthy fear had made her preserve scrupulous secrecy ; had made her plan everything with almost painful accuracy and foresight. She had felt perfectly assured that if she remained

at home until Wrayburn could come to her, the train he travelled in would be smashed, or the vessel he voyaged in would be lost. If she told him beforehand of her coming, then he, who never was ill, would fall sick at that time, or, in preparing for her, unexpected embarrassments would arise, and all the spontaneity of that welcome which she was resolved to wrest from fate would be spoiled. Alas for the mortal who would be wiser than the gods!

As Colonel Wrayburn was not intoxicated with visions, the rational state of his mind gave a rather prosaic cast to his meditations, as he sat with his gaze thoughtfully bent upon the water.

Although at thirty-seven a man has no great faith in love in a cottage, he has considerable faith in the wisdom of that old saw which declares that love flies out of the window when poverty comes in at the door.

Unfortunately, Colonel Wrayburn was

getting more and more to believe that without a good deal of money there cannot be much comfort or happiness. In trying to "forecast the years" he was only confirmed in his previous opinion that the future of these good people when married would be less roseate than they anticipated.

Let a man, if he likes, become a wild man, and live in a wood; let him light his own fire and prepare his own food, go about clad in habitual flannel shirts, wear a belt instead of braces, and sleep under rugs and furs instead of sheets and counterpanes. That is all very well. But introduce a woman, a well-bred, delicately reared woman, and see how it will work. Add to the woman, in the course of time, perhaps a family of children, and surely the roseate sky will begin to look strangely overcast.

In a rough life abroad, where the man might be contented but the woman unhappy;

in a struggling life at home, where the man would be poor and discontented, and both would be unhappy; continually beaten in the battle of life, daily bartering his birth-right for a paltry mess of pottage;—surely Lawrence, of all men, would make but a poor shift in the world, and prove a veritable broken reed to lean upon. Prospects were so bad altogether that the benevolent Ted was fain to compassionate these poor fools who had no compassion for themselves. Unless they accepted his help he failed to see what would become of them. The day might even arrive when they would mutually declare that love was madness. What a deplorable termination that would be to a *grande passion*!

Well, at least he had begun to clear their path of such obstacles as he wot of. He had got Lawrence's letter only a few days before leaving England. Instantly he had written very forcibly to Sir Ironsides Lansdell

in compliance with the request urged in that letter.

Since the days of college friendships and good fellowship the acquaintance between the two families had waned. The Lansdells lived in another county. For a long time there had been no intercourse, and only very occasional interchange of civilities. Nevertheless that forcible letter had been written—written, too, with considerable private chagrin.

Men who are unfortunate soon fade out of mind. An idea prevails that the kindest thing you can do for them is to forget their misfortunes ; but, in forgetting what makes them chiefly memorable, they are themselves forgotten.

Colonel Wrayburn did not entirely forget his brother's early friend. He still remembered there had been such an one, that he had misconducted himself and earned the disapprobation of his whole family ; but clearly

it was a kindness to forget as much as possible of one so unfortunate. Possibly he had some dim recollection of the two children prematurely orphaned by young Lansdell's early death. At the time possibly he had expressed some commiseration for their unhappy lot; possibly had concluded that the bark of the Lansdell family would be worse than their bite. If publicly they turned their back upon these disgraced children, secretly no doubt they helped them. It was no business of his to inquire into the matter.

Many people who are kindness itself, if they perceive that kindness is expected from them, are quite indifferent unless such expectation is shown. Colonel Wrayburn was somewhat inclined that way. For when it came to his knowledge that all those years his brother had been making it his business to know all about the outcast little Lansdells, and had silently been support-

ing them, certain it is that he was deeply mortified.

Not only was he very indignant with the flinty Lansdells, but indignant also with his brother, with Mr. Probyn, with himself even, in some degree. Such want of confidence all round hurt his feelings keenly. The good Ted was quite piqued by his discovery.

Here had he been lecturing Lawrence year after year, impressing upon him his moral responsibility, pointing out the necessity for action, recapitulating the whole duty of man, and seasoning all his remarks with approved moral aphorisms. And all the time, while he was preaching, Lawrence had been practising. While his own name had been ostentatiously heading the lists of every county charity, Lawrence had hidden from his left hand what his right hand was doing. While he never missed what he gave, Lawrence had only helped others by stinting himself and living obscurely.

In the surprise of his discovery he even overrated his brother's unselfishness; for there is no greater proof of the world's innate selfishness than the exorbitant merit it attaches to voluntary acts of mercy, self-denial, or fidelity. Good man as he was according to the world's judgment, Colonel Wrayburn was actually envious of what he found admirable in his brother. Perhaps he thought rich men had the monopoly of generous feeling.

It is always disconcerting to be confronted with unexpected virtue in one whom we have been accustomed to regard with comfortable superiority. Injured self-complacency must find a salve for itself. When Colonel Wrayburn had reviewed the whole affair for the hundredth time, it consoled him somehow to think that, whatever affluence in faith Lawrence might attain to, he would never lack a place among the poor of this world. Sooner

or later such heroics were bound to destroy him.

Just as he had given his brother over as a lost man the boat touched the pebbly margin, and grounded. The boatmen shipped their oars. Mary stood up. His own gloomy reflections dispersed, and he began to think there might be some remnant of hope left for Lawrence as he looked at her calm face, and noted her wonderful self-possession.

Yet, woman-like, at the very moment of action she hesitated and drew back.

"Now, Mary," he said, when he had assisted her to land from the boat, and had offered her his arm, "where is this wonderful château to be found, and which way do we take to find ourselves in the presence of the celebrated *pauvre diable*?"

"Oh, wait one moment," Mary replied, looking around a little anxiously, and pressing his arm to detain him. "Perhaps he is not at home, and, even if he is, it seems

hardly fair to take him so completely by surprise. Would it not be better to wait for a little in some of the neighbours' houses, and send down word to him that we are here, instead of walking straight in?"

"Whatever you think best," he said, comprehending her reluctance to take her lover at some possible disadvantage. "Who lives in this nearest house?"

"The Fanshawes. We will go there," she said.

The house door stood wide open. A cat, sitting lazily in the warm sunshine, left off washing her face at sight of the strangers, arched her back, stretched out her forepaws, and came towards them with a mincing tread and friendly "mew." Inside all was tidied up and in order, and so silent that a low voice humming a monotonous hymn tune and the regular tick of a pompous old clock alone broke the stillness.

It was Mrs. Fanshawe who was uncon-

sciously humming that interminable tune as she sat at work alone, gently rocking herself in a homely English rocking-chair, in which all the little Fanshawes had been put to sleep to just such sleepy tunes.

At the sound of their footsteps she raised her eyes. When they entered she ceased humming, and sprang up so suddenly that the chair fell back against the wall and went on violently swinging to and fro for nearly a minute.

“Miss Mary!” she screamed, throwing down her sewing, scissors, and thimble, and catching hold of Mary by the shoulders. “Where in the world have you come from?”—kiss, kiss. “And how in the name of wonder did you get here?”—kiss, kiss. “And why didn’t you let a body know you were a-coming?”—kiss, kiss, kiss.

“Are you not glad to see me?” Mary asked laughingly, putting her hands on the two substantial arms that supported her

like girders on either side and held her fast.

“Glad’s no name for it,” Mrs. Fanshawe answered heartily. “Yes, indeed, I am glad, and I don’t care who hears me say it. Dear knows in my heart I’ve always been fond of you, Miss Mary, whatever people may say,” she added, with a certain defiance of manner, as of one called upon to make profession of faith or recantation of heresy. “And if ever I’ve thought a hard thought, or said a hard word about you, no sinner has ever cried their eyes out harder for their sins than I’ve cried mine since, and humbly ask your pardon, my dear. And that’s the least I can do, and I can’t say more; for we’ve all got sins to answer for, and there ain’t none of us perfect, and there’s a deal of trials in life. Anyhow, there’s not a home in all Swanneck where you’d be more welcome, Miss Mary. Maybe though I’m wrong to call you ‘Miss Mary;’ but it comes

so natural-like. Are you married, my dear? Is this gentleman your husband?" she asked, with a neat pretence of never having heard of Mary's marriages, first and second, or any of her misfortunes.

"No, Mrs. Fanshawe," Colonel Wrayburn said, answering for them both, as the good woman's glances were directed towards him; "but I have had the honour of bringing her to her husband, and hope very soon to be her brother-in-law. We are going to have a wedding here within the next few hours. What do you think of the news?"

"Her brother-in-law?" she repeated, looking fixedly at him and then at Mary, who was no longer held in position by the girders. "You're not—and yet you're the dead image of him—surely you're not Mr. Wrayburn's brother?"

"Surely I am, though," he answered, smiling.

Mrs. Fanshawe seemed to find some

difficulty in grasping the relationship, or to be reaching far down into the depths of her mind for her next thought. And it was evidently some horrifying kind of thought that she at length discovered in those depths; for as she stood stupidly regarding them both with that fixed, vacant stare, her eyes grew round with dread, and all the colour ebbed slowly away from her fresh ruddy face.

“Then you’ve not heard? But of course you’ve not; there hasn’t been time for you to hear. Oh, you poor things!” she exclaimed.

Covering her face with her hands as tears gushed from her eyes, her disjointed words could no longer be distinguished. This was an ominous beginning. The two others looked silently at one another with startled eyes. In that moment’s painful silence a score of possibilities suggested themselves to Colonel Wrayburn. What had gone

wrong with Lawrence? Had he married some one else? Had he met with some frightful accident? Had he fallen into temptation and taken to following disgraceful courses? Had he committed some dreadful crime—theft, forgery, murder, suicide? Had his troubles overwhelmed him and driven him insane? Or had he gone away altogether, and did no one know where he was? The tension of that one moment was severe. His own face grew white with apprehension, and Mary's face was ashen. She had need of all her self-possession.

“Something has happened; ask her what it is,” she said, speaking steadily in a low, hard voice.

“Mrs. Fanshawe,” he said, “there is something unpleasant for us to hear; be good enough to tell us at once what it is.”

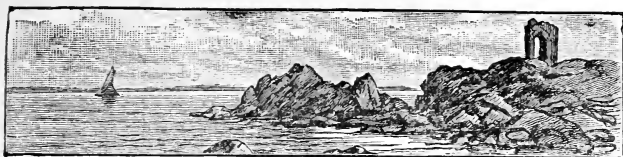
But Mrs. Fanshawe was wholly unable to tell them anything, pleasant or unpleasant, at once. Her tears flowed faster and faster,

so that her apron had to be requisitioned to absorb the increasing stream. Such words as she could articulate seemed only to be a repetition of, "Oh, you poor things! you poor things!"

"My good woman," Colonel Wrayburn exclaimed, with quick, nervous irritability, "pray don't keep us in this suspense, and don't try to mystify us. Tell us the worst, I beg of you, without further delay."

Then Mrs. Fanshawe, gulping down her sobs, and using her apron freely as a handkerchief, told them what had happened while they were on their way to Swanneck.





CHAPTER XIII.

AND what had happened?

When Wrayburn parted from Jack in anger, he went straight in the direction of Auburn, walking energetically, as an angry man walks, unmindful of what road he takes.

Night was falling just as he reached Auburn. Darkness filled the valleys and enveloped the small plateau on which the Maitland Company's ranch stood, while the snowy mountain-tops reflected the brightness of whatever pallid light yet remained in the sky. Across this open rolling prairie country

the wind blew much colder than at sheltered Swanneck, and Wrayburn, clad only in the old tweed suit, felt the want of his warm fur coat. He knew the manager of the ranch, with the major part of his men, was away on his spring round-up, but supposed that he could readily enough find rough accommodation for the night among those remaining at the ranch. Nor was he mistaken.

Several times during the night he sat up and struck a light that he might look at his watch; and, finding dawn still far off, lay down again and tried to sleep. Hour after hour passed, but sleep would not come. Broad awake he lay, listening for a long while to a couple of men jesting and wrangling over a game of cards on the other side of the thin partition. Broad awake he still lay when the men had left their play and were loudly snoring.

After the recent turbulence the lees and

dregs of his anger were slowly settling down. Doubtless he had been wrong in giving such rein to his temper. Many people, accustomed to look only on the surface, and assume that what they do not see has no existence, would have been mightily astonished to find such a violence of temper in one seemingly so equable. But, however sincere he may be, the speech and outward bearing of a man no more represent the true inner man than the surface of the ocean, where gallant ships go by, represents the bed of the same ocean, where wrecks lie in the great sea valleys, and human bones are entangled by sweeping fronds of multiform sea foliage, and the creatures that live in those "wine-dark depths" are never even seen at the surface.

If the sea were parted and a considerable tract of that strange ocean-flooring bared to view, it could scarcely be less startling than a quiet man is when he suddenly rends him-

self and shows what is rankling in the depths of his heart.

In Wrayburn there was a latent anger always. For years it had been so, unknown even to himself. His nature was not a forgiving one. Knowing how detestable a vindictive spirit is, there is in most people an anxious desire to *appear* forgiving rather than to cherish the inward feeling of forgiveness. Wrayburn, who cared little for appearances, troubled himself only about the latter. That he strove not only to act as if he had pardoned—which any man may easily do—but to feel the inner power to pardon, was in him all the more meritorious because he found it hard to forgive.

Jack had been greatly surprised that what appeared to him but a small offence should have thrown Wrayburn into such a rage. He was not aware that anger is often cumulative. It is the last straw that breaks the camel's back. To one who has borne much

wrong with outward patience, but with strong inward resistance, an offence comparatively trivial is frequently but a consummation—a last stroke that drives the iron into the soul, a final heaping up and overflowing of wrong. To a calm man it would have appeared, if not incredible, at least unreasonable in the last degree, that Wrayburn should be stirred to a white heat of anger when he discovered Jack's breach of confidence; that the betrayal of him to a few simple settlers should make him feel that he could kill his betrayer. But a calm man has not the same depth of feeling as a very intense man; can neither love nor hate with such good will. A man of cool temperament could scarcely have felt so cut to the heart by a sense of wrong as did this passionate, full-souled man who had given up much in the world, and thought the loss light, that he might consistently preserve his independence and integrity. Nor was it unreasonable that one who would have cut

off his own right hand rather than practise deceit, or take a mean advantage, should be keenly affronted by baseness in others.

A recumbent position is favourable to active thought. As Wrayburn lay sullenly chafing in the darkness, time and distance, instead of bringing healing, only added fever to his burning heart as the vanished years unfolded their records to his memory. The first wrong done to him—the cruel injustice of his brother and his betrothed—came back to his mind as freshly as ever; as damnably selfish as ever. It was useless to persuade himself he had forgiven that wrong, which not only had altered all the currents of his life, and severed him from the home and the associations of his youth, but made even those associations painful to look back upon. He had not forgiven—never could forgive.

Just as distinctly, and almost as bitterly, he remembered the dissimulation Mary had practised with him in the early dawn

of his new love. She had very nearly stranded him by persistence in a kind of justifiable double-dealing. In his bitterness he even declared to himself that she was to blame for everything. Had he known from the first that she was married, he would have left her alone, and Loxdale could have had no subsequent power over him. He abhorred himself for harbouring such a disloyal thought; but there it was.

When he came to the reviewing of Loxdale's infamy, that was too much for him. Leaning out of bed, he seized the candlestick that stood upon the floor just ready to his hand, and flung it with all his force against the opposite wall. Not a very satisfactory performance, seeing it did not break Loxdale's head, and only provoked a little sleepy profanity from the next room; but it eased his feelings sufficiently to enable him to lie down again and try to court a calmer frame of mind. Not that he believed

in frames of mind ; but it was essential that he should drive himself on to some new ground, for he felt he was only going from bad to worse, raking up all the old hatchets he had so laboured to bury, and growing more vindictive every moment.

There were many ways in which he might have had his revenge on one and all. He might have made himself a richer and more influential man than his brother, and vanquished the heartless pair in the race for that goal it was their souls' desire to win. The power to do it was in him had he chosen to exert it in that direction, and given all his mind to the work. He might have gone among other women when Mary acknowledged herself a married woman, and have taken to himself a happy young bride, and made a home for her and a new life for himself, instead of promising a lifelong celibacy to one beyond his reach. There were many ways by which he might have

compassed Loxdale's ruin ; though probably none could have been more effectual than Loxdale's own way of accomplishing that end. He might have paid Jack Lansdell's passage home, returning him to his mother with courteous explanations and grave regrets, and have washed his hands of that connection, now that the lad's education was finished, and his first start in life had proved a failure ; and none could have questioned his right to do so, or accused him of injustice.

If such thoughts had ever entered his mind, he had never permitted them to dwell there. Like the Swiss hero, he crushed the enemy's spears together and received them all in his own breast. No one had ever heard him express a word of complaint or regret ; nor had he ever failed in his full stint of ready service to those who made demand upon him. If he had been hard upon himself, rather than upon others, it

was in him to act as he had done and in no otherwise. The "changeeful winds by gods appointed" had often seemingly driven him out of his course ; but he, too, had been "true to aim, e'en though he sail obliquely."

The long hours of darkness, with their contest of fierce and gloomy thoughts, like processions of squalid demons, passed at length. Greatly humbled he felt when he came forth, after the feverish night, into the cool sunlight of a morning so fresh and bright that the very air seemed the breath of innocence. There was a crisp touch of cold in the breeze, but in the sunshine there was genial warmth, and upon the hills sun and shadow flitted in swift alternations.

Wrayburn did not take the level road home across the plain, choosing instead the short cut over the mountains that, like many another short cut, was the longest way round in the end. Long ago he had made himself thoroughly familiar with all the windings of

these savage defiles, penetrating to the wildest recesses, where, in his "tenderfoot" days, he had more than once got lost.

All the preaching of all the divines in Christendom would but have hardened his heart just then, and steeled it into obstinacy. But the silence of his old friends, "the everlasting hills," was more efficacious with him than any speech, and gradually completed the repentance which had begun to work within him.

Before he had done his first four miles he had made up his mind to offer an apology to Jack for the bitter reproaches he had recklessly hurled at him. No amount of apology, he well knew, could undo what had been done; but, while adhering to his original intention that Jack should go home, he would try as far as possible to detach disgrace from this sudden departure.

Mile after mile was steadily left behind, until he was within comparatively a short dis-

tance of Swanneck. He was coming directly downhill, and the path, if path it could be called, was so steep and rough that he had to go warily to keep his balance as he sprang down from boulder to boulder, or lowered himself over the straight unbroken front of projecting ledges of rock. At a sharp turn in this rugged way the road became suddenly easier, more level and grassy, as the swelling hillside sloped down to the lip of the lake.

At the point where the rough way and the smooth abruptly touched there was a fine open view of the scenery surrounding Swanneck. Here Wrayburn sat down to rest awhile, and to admire the long grey shadows lying softly upon the opposite hills, and the golden mists rising from warm green valleys. Far below the lake spread out a glittering sheet of water, wide and free, just ruffled by light breezes or dimpled by the occasional fall of a twig. Sometimes in its

windings it was lost to view, only to reappear further off, intersecting the dark forest and narrowing away among those distant shadowy hills—a broad bright band of silvery blue, the very colour of the fair heavens reflected upon it.

Here and there the forest was pushed back, as it were, upon itself. In the openings thus made, and upon the sunny uplands sloping to the south, bright little patches appeared, vividly green. These were the growing crops that by-and-by would provide the settlers with their meagre harvest. With hard, thankless toil those clearings had been made. Year after year pernicious seeds, long dormant in the virgin soil, pushed boldly up as fast as, or faster than, the sprouting grain. As soon as one wasteful growth was exterminated another rose to fill its place. Knowing with what labour and sweat a scanty subsistence was wrung from the hot thin soil of those sunny terraces, Wrayburn's

mind was filled with grave and lowly thoughts as he contemplated them ; and feelings such as it is good for a man to cherish gathered warmly round his heart.

It was very still and peaceful up here in the full stream of light and sunshine. With a lazy pleasure in it all, he took in the whole ; followed the purple and grey lines running like dark veins along those green valleys, showing where the stubborn rock lay ; thought how desolate Auburn looked now in the far, blue distance on a rolling waste of grey-green prairie, the lonely ranch, with its white sheds and palings, the most desolate looking of all.

So still and pleasant was it, that soon he grew drowsy and fell into a light sleep ; for the sun shone warm on this sheltered patch of hillside, and he had lain awake all night. As he slept he dreamed that he was standing with Mary at an open window overlooking a wide sea all flushed with sunset red.

Through the lustrous air a white bird was gliding smoothly, circling on snowy wings. While they rejoiced with a vague feeling that this bird meant some good omen, the beautiful white thing came hovering in wide circles nearer and nearer. Anxiously they watched it, extending to it gentle hands of invitation, until at last it flew in at the window. Just as it seemed to touch his hand he awoke.

Smiling at himself and his dreams, Wrayburn arose, and was about to proceed upon his way, when a strange sight arrested his attention and stayed his steps.

A remarkable change had taken place in the scene ; for when he stood up those opposite hills with their cool grey shadows were all blotted out. Great clouds of smoke rising from one part of the forest were rolling heavily and thickening as they rolled, spreading out and tossing in big gusty waves. Where the clouds were most dense

long streamers of flame shot up in sinuous streaks one above another, like flights of flashing spears hurled through the smoke. Every moment these flames increased, branching out with wild fierce flashes, from which a myriad fiery flakes were suddenly parted and scattered like so many fireballs. Wrayburn, shading his eyes from the sun, watched the flames with consternation. Since he had been in Swanneck there had been no serious forest fire, but this one promised to be serious. As well as he could judge, it had broken out at a point near the river, either on his own land or on Fanshawe's closely adjoining land. It did not threaten the settlement, for the wind was blowing in a contrary direction ; but it would sweep right down the valley and up the mountain-side while ever there was a pine left to burn.

With one sigh for his grand cathedral aisles, that soon would be devastated and

strewn with ashes, he hurried on, making his way to Swanneck across the sterile ridges of sandy upland instead of taking the longer and easier way down by the lake side. Not a man was left in the settlement. The anxious women crowded round him the moment he appeared. From what they told him he gathered that about half an hour before Jack had come running breathlessly with news that the pine woods were on fire. Instantly all the men had gone to fell a belt of trees to windward of those already blazing, that this plague of fire might by any means be stayed.

When he had breakfasted, Jack, with his usual heedlessness, had left his fire under the cedar tree, and had wandered to some distance. It was from the logmen he first learned that the forest was on fire. The men supposed that he had made his fire too large and too near the cedar, and the blaze had caught its low-spreading boughs.

In a place where great trees stood so thickly together, those nearest to the doomed tree were quickly ignited. The currents of air rushing up the narrow gorges running between the hills fanned the flames and drew them along with a fierce dull roar. It was not known how far the fire had spread, or what danger menaced their homes, and the hearts of the women died within them as they heard that ominous sound, and saw the atmosphere becoming more murky every moment. Wrayburn only stayed to reassure these poor women, and then started off for the scene of the conflagration.

The men had only partially succeeded in cutting off the fire; faster than they could work the sheet of flame rolled furiously along the valley. Poor Fanshawe's whole thoughts were centred in his saw-mill. From its position it was safe, for it stood upon the bank of the river, and there was not a tree nor a blade of grass within two hundred

yards' distance. Some of the logmen lived in little wooden shanties built round about on this open space, and those would also probably escape. But between the mill and the burning forest stood the long two-storied building which Fanshawe had erected for the winter quarters of his Chinamen. The Chinese labourers lived in the upper portion ; the lower being used as a stable, barn, workshop, and general store-place. Immense piles of logs and sawn timber lay close to this house. Before a fifth of these could be removed, the fire had touched them and made them one with itself. And now the end of the house nearest to it had caught fire and was beginning to blaze merrily.

Round about the men stood watching it. They were faint with heat, sick with the smell of smouldering herbage, wearied with their unavailing labours, begrimed with smoke, their clothes drenched with carrying

water. By this time they saw that all the water they could bring would be as nothing to save the timber building. This fire had mastered them, and must inevitably consume all before it, until nothing further was left for it to consume.

Suddenly a Chinaman ran up to Fanshawe and said something hurriedly in his pigeon-English. Fanshawe's florid complexion became quite apoplectic, and his light eyes stood out like gooseberries in his head.

"This beggar says there's a man in there—a sick Chinaman," he exclaimed. "What's to be done now?"

There was a moment's pause, and they all looked doubtfully at one another. Into such moments the whole tone of thought and habits of a man's lifetime are compressed; by such moments the stuff he is made of is determined. There were many men there who would have risked much to rescue a

white man; but these Chinese had always been hateful to them, and they were not going to risk much for one of them. When Fanshawe said, "What's to be done now?" there was dead silence for a moment, until some one who had just come up said instantly, "Why, we'll get him out, of course," and made his way to the front.

He was no stronger than many present, though a temperate, healthy, open-air life had braced a naturally hardy frame, and his muscles were tough as steel. But he was that most uncommon thing—a meek man, one who had accustomed himself to think of himself not as the most important person in the world, but as the last and least. Before they knew who it was, he was climbing up by whatever niches and projections the log-wall offered until he reached the window in the end of the house; for there were no windows in the lower portion, and

the only entrance was at the part already burning.

There was no window-sill ; but by drawing himself up level with the window he drove his left foot through the glass, and planted it securely on the framework. Through the hole thus made a great puff of smoke rushed out and enveloped him.

"It's no use trying. You'll only be choked. Come down out of that," they cried to him from below.

"I'm all right," he said confidently, looking round and down at them for a moment.

As it had not been found that Chinese health required a very perfect system of ventilation, the window was not made to open. Securing his hold as well as he could on either side, he drew up the other foot, steadied himself, and then let drive again at the window-frame. In it went, with a rattle of broken glass and splintered wood, and he sprang down into the room. But he could not have

crossed the floor when there came an awful crash that shook the air, and resounded with a dull heavy reverberation. The blazing roof had fallen in, the yet unburned portions being dragged down by the weight of the blazing rafters. Dense volumes of smoke drove the little crowd back in all directions. Above the smoke leaped great licking tongues, lapping one over the other in waves of fire. A sharp, crackling sound was added to the furious roar that already filled the air, and through the smoke broken brands and flaming shreds and sparks fell in showers.

When the momentary stampede was over the men looked at each other in consternation. Then Penrhyn, tearing the axe out of his belt, rushed right through the black smoke, and began to deal mighty blows upon that end of the wall to which the fire had not yet reached. The logs yielded and bent inward. Putting all his strength into a

final blow, the axe-handle snapped short off in his hand, while the head went spinning behind, past the nearest men, who dodged it as it flew.

"The stairs aren't there, you fool," shouted Fanshawe; and Penrhyn looked round with dark eyes glowing like lamps in his pale, set face.

"Only let me in, that's all, and I'll get upstairs," he said, with a great oath.

The others quickly tore down the planks sufficiently to effect an entrance.

"Widen that; we've got to fetch him down," he said, as they passed into the burning house.

There was no proper staircase, only a wooden ladder-like fixture similar to the iron ladder leading down into the stoke-hole of a steamer. Up this they climbed, and entered the room above. At the very head of the stair they came upon the Chinaman. He was sitting on the ground, with knees

closely drawn up and clasped round by his emaciated arms. His head lay back against the wall, his filmy eyes looking straight before him. Evidently he had dragged himself thus far in an attempt to get down ; but either the effort had been too exhausting, or the smoke had suffocated him, for he was quite dead.

Leaving him to his own countrymen, they pushed on through the choking and bewildering smoke. Under a mass of *débris*, not ten paces from the window by which he had entered, they found Wrayburn's body. When they drew him out he too was apparently dead ; his face was purple, and there was a little frothy blood upon his lips. There was not a moment to be lost. The flames were darting nearer and hemming them in, while the heat and smoke were intolerable. As quickly as they could they got him lowered down the awkward ladder. Once in the open air again, they carried him to

a quiet spot away from the drifting smoke-clouds, and laid him down.

Duffy and Penrhyn alone remained with the injured man. Again all hands were called off to fell a wider circle of trees nearer the settlement, with the object of confining the fire to this one river valley, or "strath," as McFarlane called it. The sappy, resinous pines spurted and hissed as if they drank up fire and loved it, while the cedar boughs as they ignited snapped with loud reports like pistol shots. Fiery tree-stumps tottering and falling, hot blackened ground, and a sickly sunlight falling wan and weird through a lurid atmosphere, had taken the place of the beautiful forest glades lit up by cheerful sunshine where Jack had sat peacefully that morning, bidding farewell to all the loveliness around with poignant regret.

The two men cut a couple of long straight pine branches and attached their own coats to them. On this rude ambulance they

carried Wrayburn down to the settlement, avoiding the open road, where a little crowd of frightened women and children stood chattering like a group of excited magpies.





CHAPTER XIV.

AS they were bringing him into his own room, Wrayburn suddenly recovered consciousness. He opened his dazed eyes with a bewilderment that quickly changed to comprehension of his own situation.

“Enter a ghost to solemn music,” he said feebly.

“Faith, no ghost, but just yerself, as large as life, and twice as natural,” said Duffy’s cheerful voice, as they laid him gently down upon his bed.

“How is the Chinaman? Did you get him out alive?” he asked presently.

“Ah, don’t be botherin’ yerself about the

Chinaman. He's doin' finely, and not half as much hurt as yerself," said the ready-witted Irishman, who did not care to let Wrayburn know just then that he had thrown himself away for a dead man.

"You had no right to go after a rotten Chinaman," said Penrhyn, severely.

"I didn't want to ; but how could I help it ? You wouldn't let the unfortunate fellow be roasted alive," Wrayburn replied.

Presently other men came dropping in, for the fire would burn itself out, and as there was no further apprehension of danger, they came eagerly to learn Wrayburn's fate.

"Howh do you feelh yerself nowh ? Where haf you most pain ?" Morgan asked, as they began to undress him to examine his wounds.

"I've no particular pain anywhere," he said ; "or if I have I don't know where it is exactly. I'm sick and dizzy."

As he spoke he fainted again, and the men regarded him with much perplexity.

“I’m afraid,” said Penrhyn, sadly, “he’s hurt just like poor Saul Kernick. I worked in the same quarry at home with Saul, and one day a great chunk of stone that hadn’t come away at the blasting fell on him. It hit the back of his neck, and he fell twelve or fifteen feet. We took him up for dead, but he lived nigh on ten years after, only never left his bed; he was a paralyzed cripple.”

There was in Quentin a young fellow named Courtenay, who had studied medicine at one time of his life, but growing tired, and, thirsting for novelty, had drifted into wandering and uncertain modes of existence. It was late at night before this man could be found and brought to Wrayburn.

Inexperienced as he was, he knew the case was hopeless. When he had dressed the superficial wounds, he sat down on the edge of the bed, and looked earnestly at

Wrayburn, who had only regained consciousness since his entrance.

"You are badly hurt," he said quietly.

"Yes, I'm done for; I knew it when the roof fell in on me," Wrayburn returned.

Courtenay was too honest to contradict him, or to hold out hopes which he plainly saw would be rejected.

"After all," he said, by way of consolation, "I suppose most of us would rather make a quick end and be done with it, than linger on for years a chronic invalid."

"I don't know about that," Wrayburn retorted quickly. "Life is a good thing, even at its worst. I don't feel in the dying humour, and should like to have lived longer. But if I must go, there's no use talking about it; for there's no discharge in this war."

When Courtenay returned to the outer room, the people waiting there looked anxiously at him, almost afraid to question him. At last some one said—

“Will he recover?”

And Courtenay shook his head. “Never in this world. Poor fellow! he’s completely smashed. The spine is fatally injured and he’s been crushed internally. From the hips down he’s dead already—hopelessly paralyzed.”

“But I’ve known a man hurt that way live for ten years after,” Penrhyn broke in eagerly, with a tendency to revert to the case of his friend Saul and the chunk of stone.

“I tell you,” said Courtenay, “he can’t live. He may last a few days or a few hours—that sort of thing depends upon his own vitality; but he’s bound to go, and seems to have made up his mind for it.”

“And what are we to do for him?” they asked.

“There’s nothing more to be done. I’ve fixed him up as well as I can. Give

him whatever he can take, and don't leave him alone. I'll be over again to-morrow evening."

After that the men arranged to take it in turn to watch beside him. The women came in to "tidy up," and to talk compassionately to him, and to vilify the unfortunate Jack, whom they regarded as the author of all the mischief. They were kind but fussy, and prepared so many dainties, that had he been able to take all he was offered, the probability is that even in robust health Wrayburn would have suffered from an attack of acute dyspepsia.

Several times he asked for Jack; but Jack was not forthcoming. When at length he made his appearance, late in the evening, he looked very pale as to his colour, and suspiciously red about the eyes. All his lofty manner was gone. The poor lad seemed utterly crushed, and shook visibly when he looked down at the wreck of the

man from whom he had parted in full health and strength only a few hours before.

“Jack, I’m awfully sorry for what I said yesterday, and sincerely beg your pardon. It was very insulting; but my temper was up, and I don’t think I meant it all,” Wrayburn said to him. “And I’m very glad you are come, for I want to speak with you.”

“Oh, Mr. Wrayburn, *don't*; don’t ask my pardon,” cried the wretched lad, huskily. “It’s been all my fault. I’ve killed you, I know; I feel as if I murdered you.”

“Nonsense!” said the other. “My time had come, and I could not live an hour later, nor die an hour before it. Don’t be worrying yourself about that. ‘Let every man’s fate kill him, or God who made him.’ What I wanted to say is this: you must go home at once. Until you hear from Sir Edmond Lansdell you’ll remain with—that reminds me! What was I saying, Jack? I was telling you something, but my head

spins round, and it's gone from me now. My dear boy, don't be so distressed ; it can do no good. I wish my head was clearer ; there's a great deal to do. You'll send a telegram from New York. I'm sorry for your poor mother ; but tell her the Chinaman was not hurt after all."

His mind was wandering, and poor Jack's pain was so keen that he broke down, and sobbed bitterly without any attempt at concealment. Mrs. Fanshawe spoke kindly to him, and led him out of the room.

"Don't mind, Jack ; it will be all right, and we'll see about getting you back to your friends in England," she said cheerily.

But Jack was not thinking of England.

All through the night Wrayburn was light-headed and talked at times with incoherent extravagance.

"Mary," he exclaimed suddenly, in such clear, trenchant tones, that the two men sitting gloomily over the stove, started and

looked round uneasily when the silence was so unexpectedly broken—"Mary, why have you got that horrid black dress on again? It makes you look so pale, and your eyes are full of tears. When I am gone, my poor love—when I am gone there will be a heartache in the very air. . . . Yes, yes ; they are very clever ; they will find out all about it once they get round that corner. They'll come straight on the Almighty Himself then, and be able to show us what a very small thing He was after all. . . . See how they push each other on. . . . But God has a sense of humour too, and beyond that corner there's another corner, and another, and still they crowd on. . . . How dark it grows ! I shall miss him, after waiting all this time. . . . Such a crowd ! these faces weary me . . . among them all I can't see his . . . I must see him . . . I want to tell him—Ah ! if it grows so dark I'll forget it all again. . . . Was the game worth the candle, Lox-

dale? We must both die, and our ashes will be scattered to the four winds. . . . Happy children will never eat the bread made from that corn; the starved children of jail-birds, prowling in the markets, will snatch it from the gutter and eat it, not knowing it was Loxdale once, and it will bring them to the treadmill and the gallows. . . . There is something I wanted to tell you, but I've forgotten what it is. . . . No, I'll not believe it. He will come back, when we have both ended all our circles and paid our uttermost farthing. What's the use of preaching to souls in prison if there are no souls, or no prisons, or no return from them? He will come back, and I perhaps shall know him better then, and be able at last to forgive him. . . . Darker . . . darker. . . . I shall never find him now, and that sound worries me. Is it a woman crying, or a child? . . . Fanshawe, give me your hand, like a good fellow; it's so dark; I can't see, and this

crowd bewilders me. Tell me what it is that I've forgotten. . . . If I could only remember ! . . . Light . . . rest . . . one can't desire anything better. . . . It was most ridiculous to see all their eyes staring up at me through the smoke ; one man, with an awful squint, and rings in his ears, had his whole chest tatooed with the crucifixion . . . didn't you notice ?”

Thus he rambled on ; his voice sometimes sinking to a drowsy murmur, sometimes rising with the excitement of fancied labours and difficulties. There are few things more wearisome than listening to the incoherent stream of talk from a delirious patient. It made Fanshawe do a most unnecessary amount of stoking, and it made Duffy most active in opening doors and windows to counteract the effects of excessive warmth. Towards morning he fell into a heavy sleep, from which he awoke some hours later, apparently much refreshed.

McFarlane alone was in the room with him, and kneeling in an attitude of prayer. He rose at once and came forward when he perceived that Wrayburn was awake.

“Ye’ve haud a fine rest, an’ll be needin’ somethin’ now,” he said. “Wull ye hauce a wee drop o’ wine? Eugene’s sent ye in a case o’ his best.”

“He is very kind,” Wrayburn replied; “but as I’m tolerably comfortable just now, and know from experience what extraordinary vintages find their way into Swan-neck, it seems a pity to hasten my own end—doesn’t it?”

McFarlane smiled grimly. “’Deed, I daur say ye’re right, an’ as weel wi’out it. But th’ braundy canna harm ye; or wull ye try some rum?”

Wrayburn preferred the former. When he had taken it he said, “While my mind is clear there are a few things I want to settle. You and I have had occasional

differences of opinion; but they have left no permanent mistrust or ill will, I hope. All my things here I leave in your charge. As soon as I'm gone you will write to my brother, and await his instructions about them. At the same time you'll forward my will to him; but I want first to make a slight alteration in it. If you will write it for me, I think I can manage to sign it. Bury me here in the woods, by the lake; and don't write up any pious nonsense over me—only my name. If my brother choses to have my body taken over to England, well and good; but tell him I would rather lie here in the forest."

"Muster Wrayburn," said McFarlane, with his most solemn manner, "it's a great blessin' yere mind's so clear. Au'm sensible o' th' honour ye've done me in trustin' me this way, an' Au'll not forget it. Yere wishes shall be carried out to th' vaira letter. But Au'm no great scholar. If there's

writin' ye waunt doin mebbe ye'll let my Agnes caum an' do't for ye—she's a gude writer ; or young Jack mayhap——”

“No ; I would rather he did not see it ; his feelings might only be hurt. It doesn't matter who does it so long as it's done. Send Agnes to me when she is ready.”

“Au'll send her after dinner. But, sir, ye should na let yere mind be runnin' so much on airthly things. Ye should be considerin' yere aun puir soul. Is it well wi' ye ? When ye look bauck do ye no' see yeresel' a puir, misguidit, miserable body, wi' a misspent life, an' a load o' filthy rags that ye think's yere aun righteousness ?”

“When I look back,” said Wrayburn, thoughtfully, as if speaking to himself, “I am thankful for the good world I have lived my thirty-four years in. With the exception of one or two heavy sorrows, I have had few troubles ; and am bound to say I've enjoyed my life and known many happy years. It

would be mean and ungrateful to remember only the miseries at the last."

McFarlane looked doubtful, but he fancied he discerned in Wrayburn's words something of the shibboleth that he was anxiously waiting to hear. "Hau've ye made yere peace wi' God?" he said. "How d'ye feel about staundin' before His awfu' jedgement thraune?"

"On my gods relying, though the end be land or shipwreck," Wrayburn answered, smiling slightly.

McFarlane had no recognition of Goethe, but it sounded well, he thought, and supposed the plural "gods" to be a mere slip of the tongue arising from weakness.

When he went home he told his wife with grave satisfaction of the "nice frame" Wrayburn was in. He had many weighty remarks to make also on the efficacy of prayer, and the faith which stumbleth not at the plucking of a brand from the burning, however free-

thinking that brand's tendencies might be. And at dinner-time he recalled certain passages in his own religious experiences for the spiritual benefit of his sons, on whom this had seemingly a very depressing effect, for they ate their mutton in dead silence, and with as much haste as if they were assisting at the original Passover.

In the afternoon Agnes was ushered in by one of the women, who had given her many cautions beforehand.

The girl slid softly into the room, closed the door, advanced a few steps, and then stopped short, and regarded Wrayburn with startled eyes. All her ideas of death were associated with the thought of pain and wasting disease. She knew that Wrayburn was dying; but, as he had not been ill previously, she was unprepared for so great an alteration in him. For his strong, supple, shapely hands lay heavily upon the coverlet, as inert and almost as bloodless-looking as

the marble hands of a monumental figure. An unusual dilation of the pupils made his eyes look strangely dark and large. Such brilliant restless eyes in such a pale, still, sunken face frightened Agnes. He saw her hesitation, and held out his feeble hand with the ghost of a smile.

"Come here, Agnes, and don't be afraid of me," he said. "It is very kind of you to come. Bring over that desk, and I'll tell you what I want done; for I'm afraid of my memory playing me false again."

Agnes brought the desk and opened it, and gave him the papers he asked for.

"Now just write briefly at the foot of this page," said he, "*Everything I have in the world I leave to Mary Ford Loxdale (spoken of above as Mary Ford Wrayburn). I entrust to her care John Lansdell, and several other persons whose names I have already given her, and I make it my dying request that she will continue to give them such*

reasonable help as she sees needful.' I don't see what more I can do," he said reflectively. "It's not very legal-looking, but it will obviate any difficulty about the changed name ; and whoever else fails, *she* can always be depended upon. Now hold it up, on the back of a book or something, and give me a pen."

Slowly, with great difficulty, he wrote his name at the foot of the page which she held up for him.

"Sign your own name to it, Agnes, and then leave it, for some one else must sign it too. But first bring me my watch. It's all in a smash on that table. I want you to put it up carefully in a good strong envelope, and seal it, and direct it to Mrs. Loxdale."

All that he told her to do Agnes did obediently, but with rebellion in her heart, and hot tears blinding her sight.

"Lock the desk, and put it away again," he said, when she had done his bidding.

"If you'll open that drawer in the dressing-table, you'll find some odds and ends in it belonging to me. Bring them over here, and see if you can find anything among them that you would like to keep in remembrance of me."

There was nothing very valuable in the drawer—only a watch-guard, some gold studs and sleeve-buttons, a couple of pencil-cases, several penknives, and other masculine property. But when she took them in her hands, she broke into a fit of childish, uncontrollable tears. His kind voice, faint as it was, yet familiar in her ears, and the thought that soon she would hear it no more, suddenly overpowered her.

"Come here, my child," he said. But the child would not come.

"Oh no, no, no," she wailed. "You give everything you value to her, because you love her; and I am only a child to you. Yet I would gladly give my life this moment

to save yours. If she loves you, so have I loved you, with my whole heart. And what's the good of life to me when you are gone? I don't want to live another day. I wish I was dead now. I wish I had died long ago before ever I was so unhappy."

She spoke rapidly, with all the recklessness of a passionate woman. Poor girl! she little knew how distasteful a scene of any kind is to the dying, most of all a love-scene.

Wrayburn was distressed, but he did not understand. "It hurts me to hear you speak in this way, Agnes," he said. "I thought you would like to keep some little thing that belonged to me for my own sake, not for its value. It is ridiculous of you to feel jealous. There! dry your tears, and bring those things here. If they won't do you shall choose anything else you like."

"Do you think I'm caring for the value?" she demanded proudly. "Oh, it cuts me in pieces to hear you say so. Who is there

in the world I can be jealous of? It's no use. Or what is there in the world that I can value or care for? I cared for you. I would die for you; and now my heart is just breaking—breaking—breaking.”

Even a dying man must have been dull indeed if he failed to understand at last that this girl really loved him, and was telling her love in simple despair. But a dying man is hard to rouse. He has no longer any interest in women, nor any vanity to be stirred, nor any worldly future to stimulate his thoughts. All things are of equal interest or importance in the active world when he has no longer any part to play in the busy drama. Not knowing what to say, Wrayburn remained silent, and Agnes wept without interruption. When at length, thinking that he was offended, she checked her sobs and dried her tears, she kept her face averted from him.

“You despise me, I know,” said she, “and

of course I deserve it; I despise myself. But when I saw you lying there, and knew that—that I should never see you again, something came over me that I couldn't help."

A tremor of sharpest pain and shame was in her voice, and she began nervously putting back the things into the drawer.

"Come here to me, Agnes," he said.

With a hesitating step and an appealing expression, she went over to him and slipped her hand into his.

"Do not tell me," he said, "that you despise yourself, or that I despise you. There is no cause for shame. I would be no man, but a brute, if I did not honour you, and feel grateful to you for giving me so much of your affection. You will always, I hope, think kindly of me, and I shall not forget you. My memories are my own, as much a part of myself as my own character. When I cease to remember I

must have ceased to exist. Into whatever order of things I go when I leave this world, I shall carry with me the bright memory of a little lassie who was very sweet and dear to me."

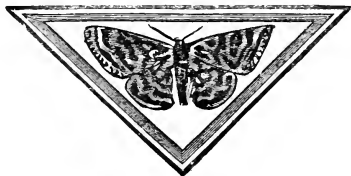
The very comfort he tried to give her only made her young heart ache more and more. She shaded her face with her disengaged hand, and cried quietly.

"I have no rings or ornamental things to give you," he went on, "but keep the sleeve-links, because you can wear those; and give the gold studs to Jack. Poor Jack! he is very unhappy, and won't come near me. You must try to cheer him up. I feel very tired now, Agnes, and should like to be alone for a little while. Good-bye, dear."

"Good-bye, Mr. Wrayburn," she murmured, with a deep sob.

He drew her down to him, and kissed her gently two or three times, and held her

hands with a lingering clasp, and felt very fond of this girl, and wished passionately in his heart that it was another woman whose hands he held, another woman on whose lips he might lay his last kiss.





CHAPTER XV.

WHEN Wrayburn was left alone, he lay quiet and thoughtful. He felt tenderly towards the poor girl who had just gone out; but it was a calm tenderness, very different from the strong feelings of pity and remorse the same knowledge would, a few days previously, have aroused in him.

Incapable of making the least exertion, and free from acute pain, he yet felt penetrated by a sense of fatigue and extreme weakness. His mind was clear and tranquil, filled with a patient resignation. Already his hold upon life was loosening. The world was receding from him. He was

adventuring forth upon an unknown sea without fear or speculation. Earth, with its travails, and sorrows, and disappointments, was something he had passed through and was now leaving behind in the distance. He looked back with many a fond regret, many an unconquered wish, many a vain self-accusation, but with a quiet trust, an invincible hope, shining through all his thoughts, and illuminating the cloudy portals to which he was drawing near. All the ineffectual veils of custom and opinion were dropping away from his vision. All that weight of formalism and materialism which chokes our life was lifting and dispersing like a heavy mist. The spiritual perceptions of the simple soul within him were growing clearer and stronger as the shattered form in which it had tabernacled sank down into ruin and darkness. He was not tired of life, not eager to leave it; but like a good conscript on whom the lot has fallen, he

was ready to go forward cheerfully to obey the compelling call. The silence of the wild solitudes around were typical to himself of the solitude in his own soul. Alone among the hills he had lived; alone among the hills he was dying. He could not lift his head; but he knew the sun was setting by the slanting beam from the north-west that crept up along the wall. As the sun sank lower the sunbeam crept higher, and the wish came upon him that he might die at sunset.

All his thoughts were retrospective, but not sad. He thought of that Sunday evening when he and Mary had watched the sunset from the Cornish coast on that day which might have marked an epoch in his life; and of the little children for whom he had gathered up the shells, so soon to be scattered again.

All his hopes in life, and all his griefs, were ended. The real bitterness of death

had been passed when he had parted from Mary. To him no actual death could add width or depth to the dividing stream. Though he loved her with the same strength of love as ever, his thoughts were no longer churned by anxiety to desperation when he considered her future—its gaunt desolation, or hideous companionship. Such a gracious composure pervaded all his faculties and senses, that he could not but feel all things would yet be well with her. Peace and an abiding trust would surely come to her, as they had come to him at last, and comfort her.

Now, more than ever, those immaterial things which he had most valued during life, seemed to him to justify that high value. All that was worth taking with him from the world he was able to take unimpaired. He had lost much ; but in looking back now, he was able to see those losses had touched only the outward man ; the inner man had

been stripped of nothing permanently valuable.

Young Courtenay came over again that night from Quentin, as he had promised.

He found Jack Lansdell alone in the dark sitting-room, crying quietly to himself. In the lighted inner room a little group of men and women were gathered round the bed.

For as the evening advanced a great change had taken place in Wrayburn. He was sinking rapidly now. A livid shade was stealing over his face ; his hair was wet with the sweat of death ; his eyes were cloudy ; his chest heaved painfully with the slow labouring breath ; his nerveless arms moved faintly, yet ceaselessly, in the restlessness of an oppression and exhaustion insupportable.

Courtenay bent over him, and saw that he was quite unconscious. "Poor fellow," he said compassionately, "it will soon be all over with him. He did not last long."

“ Oh, thank God, thank God ! ” said Mrs. Fanshawe, down whose face the tears were streaming. “ It’s dreadful to see the poor fellow suffering like that, and not be able to help him. Poor soul, poor soul ! He was a good man ; it’s only when he’s gone we’ll feel his loss.”

“ Hush,” said Courtenay, softly. “ Don’t stand round him too closely ; let him have air.”

They moved back a little, quietly, and for a few minutes no other sound was heard in the room but that hard-drawn breath growing ever slower and fainter. Presently the silence was broken by a high-pitched voice praying in a peculiar monotone. It was Morgan, the sometime Welsh Methodist preacher ; and, moved by one instinct, all present knelt simultaneously.

“ O God,” he prayed, rocking himself backwards and forwards a little in the fervour of his petition, “ have mercy upon

the soul of our dear brother now passing from this world to Thy throne of judgment. Leave him not alone in these last moments. Let him have the comfort of Thy presence in the dread shades of that dark valley, that the enemy of souls may have no power over him. Let it be all light to him, though it looks like all darkness to us. May he lean upon Thy strength. Cleanse him from the stain of original sin, and from the stains he has contracted in passing through a sinful world. Oh, wash him in the saving blood of Christ! Receive his soul to Thyself, pardoned through the merits of his Saviour and Redeemer."

A whispered "Amen" ran round the room, and all rose as quietly as they had knelt down.

Courtenay held up his hand with a warning gesture. A ray of consciousness was flickering back into those sombre eyes. The soul in departing seemed to hover around

the threshold. For a moment he looked quite bright and natural, and like his former self.

“ With my whole heart — I have — tried—— ” he said.

As they bent forward to catch the halting words, no words came. A shiver passed over him from head to foot; the voice was silent, the form was motionless. The unearthly mystery of death was in the weird, fixed gaze. On the face, which suddenly looked strangely old and worn, as if with long sickness, an august serenity was impressed. Wrayburn had passed from the world of sense. What he had tried to do or say was left unknown—unfinished. But the very words, broken off as they were, struck the key-note of his whole life-chord. Into whatever he had attempted he had put his whole heart. No half-hearted pilgrim had he been, looking out for all the easy ways, and turned aside by every lion in the

path. Those who stood around felt, without reasoning upon it, that they had just witnessed the passing of a guileless and heroic soul.

All this Mrs. Fanshawe related to the newly arrived travellers who, in a moment, found themselves mourners. She told her tale with a homely pathos, with many a heavy sigh and sorrowful ejaculation, with lengthy digressions, and all that elaboration of detail that woman love.

Colonel Wrayburn made no attempt to conceal the effect her story had upon him. He listened to it with his face hidden in his hands, the tears trickling through his fingers, his figure shaken by the sobs that he found it impossible to suppress.

And Mary heard it without a sign, without moan or lamentation; sitting rigidly still and calm, with the awful stony calm of a Fate; gazing straight before her with strain-

ing eyes that seemed to look beyond the world, beyond all life, all time.

When the tale was ended she rose with a gesture that hindered any one from following, and with a step as even and steady as ever, went down and walked through the silent rooms of the melancholy and untenanted little château. It looked exactly the same as ever, and yet quite different; for the unused look and chill orderliness, that tell so plainly of a recent death, were everywhere visible. All his surroundings, that he had stamped and fashioned in his own image, were swept and garnished out of all similitude.

Leaving the house, she went into the forest. A little nook receding from an indentation of the lake, darkened and almost hidden by overarching leafage, once known to them as "Mary's Refuge," was the spot Wrayburn had chosen for his last resting-place. There she found a mound, with a

low wooden cross at its head, marking the first grave that had been made in Swanneck. It was covered with wild flowers, twisted into rudely shaped wreaths and crosses and garlands, placed there by the children, who felt a half-awed pleasure in the novelty of having a grave to deck out in this fashion. But all had not been brought hither by childish hands. Some had been laid there secretly by one who had thrown herself down, and wept as if she would weep her heart away. Poor little Agnes, what a cold shade has this early grief and loss thrown over the springtime of your life!

It is a fine thing to be buried with "all the pomp and panoply" of woe—with princes for pall-bearers, with solemn requiem music, with beat of muffled drum and booming of artillery. Thus the great ones of the earth are buried. And who are the great ones? What constitutes greatness? Kings and emperors with their legions may strike terror,

may wreak vengeance, may desolate; but they cannot compel a single human soul to love them. To be loved requires a force greater than that of legions, a power more than imperial. To win love—that is greatness. To be mourned with undying love is the very essence of that greatness which we seek to symbolize by laurel wreaths and monuments graven to commemorate.

For a few moments Mary paused to read the brief inscription upon the wooden cross, and her thoughts were very bitter. It was not alone that she felt all light was withdrawn, that the world was to her henceforth empty and worthless as a broken shell, but she felt that he had been slighted. The world has its own way of accepting or rejecting its brothers, and unless it sees signs and wonders it will not believe. Wrayburn had served the world where it least suspected, and it saw only his demerits. Where he could be of no use it had loudly demanded

his services. It is not the showy citizen who makes the best servant; but at all times a thoroughly sane man, clear-headed and determined, is a gain to society—a rallying point for waverers, a *memento mori* to the selfish and cowardly, a standard-bearer and defender of the faith, however obscure he may be. A wave of influence spreads from him stronger than he knows, wider than he suspects. It was sanity and the humility of true pride that made Wrayburn choose to live despised and condemned, rather than stand with his feet upon a dunghill to have a gilt crown placed upon his head amid shouts of applause. His ambition had dreamed of something more lasting than a life-interest in pinchbeck.

Mary sat down beside the low wooden cross, and dropped her head between her hands. There was more of hopeless sorrow in the attitude than if she had cast herself down, like that poor child, with floods of bitter tears.

In such an attitude will woman sit in times of war and famine. With the smoking ruins of their homes before them, the trampled fields around; fathers, sons, and husbands dead; beggared, bereaved, and desolate they sit bowed down, steeped in a grief too great for words, a hopelessness too profound for tears.

With such a stillness of despair did Mary sit and mourn for her dead husband. Rest quiet, happy dead, whose works do follow you! How many would gladly that some of their "great works" might be hidden in oblivion rather than follow after to be tried by a purer than this world's judgment!

How long she sat there she knew not; but twilight shadows were thickening around her when the stillness was broken by an approaching footstep. Mary did not alter her position or look up, for she recognized the step as Colonel Wrayburn's. He had been looking over his brother's papers and

effects, inquiring into his relations with Jack Lansdell, trying to get some knowledge of his worldly affairs in general. The men had been giving him a detailed account of the fire, and now he had just come from visiting the spot where Lawrence had met his tragic end.

Colonel Wrayburn did not speak to Mary, or disturb her. He halted at the foot of the grave as she had done, and read the roughly cut epitaph, and gazed at the mass of wild flowers. All colour was gone from them now. In this glimmering light they looked "a wannish white." Listlessly he moved to the head of the mound. Folding his arms upon the low cross, he bowed down his head upon them and thought of the brother of his youth—his only brother.

Did neither of them hear the comforting voice of some shining one saying to them, "He is not here ; behold, He is risen " ? They heard it not ; they only knew that day

would follow day, and summer succeed to winter, and still he would never come. Never again would he sit with them at feast or festival, or go in and out and take his place among them when they gathered around the fire. Never again would they hear his voice or clasp his hand, or their eyes be gladdened by sight of him. His place would know him no more ; and they were unable to contemplate the blank.

That sorrowful man, bending above the lowly grave, was thinking of poor sailors who had gone down within sight of shore ; of bridegrooms struck by the hand of death while rejoicing with their brides ; of exiles returning from long banishment, and passing under triumphal arches to a grave in their native land. Too late, he thought, too late ! If Mary had but arrived a fortnight earlier all had been well. But for the selfish figment of Christina's illness that fortnight had been gained. Had Mary made no innocent

secret of her coming Lawrence would have gone to meet her. If he had not lost his temper Jack would not have breakfasted in the woods, and there had been no fire. Had Jack not vented his spleen in telling injurious tales there would have been no quarrel. Unfortunately the injurious tales had some foundation in real truth. But, though it is possible to trace an event "from genesis to judgment," we are powerless as ever to change the currents leading up to that event. What is passed is not gone, but survives under new names through endless transmutations.

Colonel Wrayburn roused himself at last from his dreary thinking. "Mary, do not stay here any longer ; it is not good for you," he said, laying his hand gently upon her arm as he stooped over her.

She rose submissively, and together they stood looking vacantly down at the narrow strip of ground that covered their light of life.

“Come, Mary, let us go home, dear,” he urged.

She lifted her face and looked at the pale sky; at the darkened woods; at the unchanged yet ever-changing mountains; at the lake, overspread by a solemn gloom, its waters looking as black and motionless as if some devil’s mischief was brewing in their sullen depths.

A little faint sigh arose somewhere within the folded hills. It gathered force as it drew onward, filling the upper branches of the trees with an agitation that rustled every leaf against its shivering neighbour, ere it passed on and died away into silence.

“Home!” she echoed with a bitter emphasis. “Where is home?”

Alas, poor Mary! have you, too, been seeking for blue roses, expecting to find them as though they were native to earth’s fields? In vain have you climbed the steep sharp mountains, or followed the windings

of the pleasant valleys. In vain have you heard, "They are here; they are there!" Searching, they still eluded your search. When you thought to grasp them, they vanished. They do indeed bloom, but not here. We shall indeed find them, but not until we ourselves have found again those purified ones whom we "have loved long since, and lost awhile."

THE END.



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